

Korean History
for International Citizens



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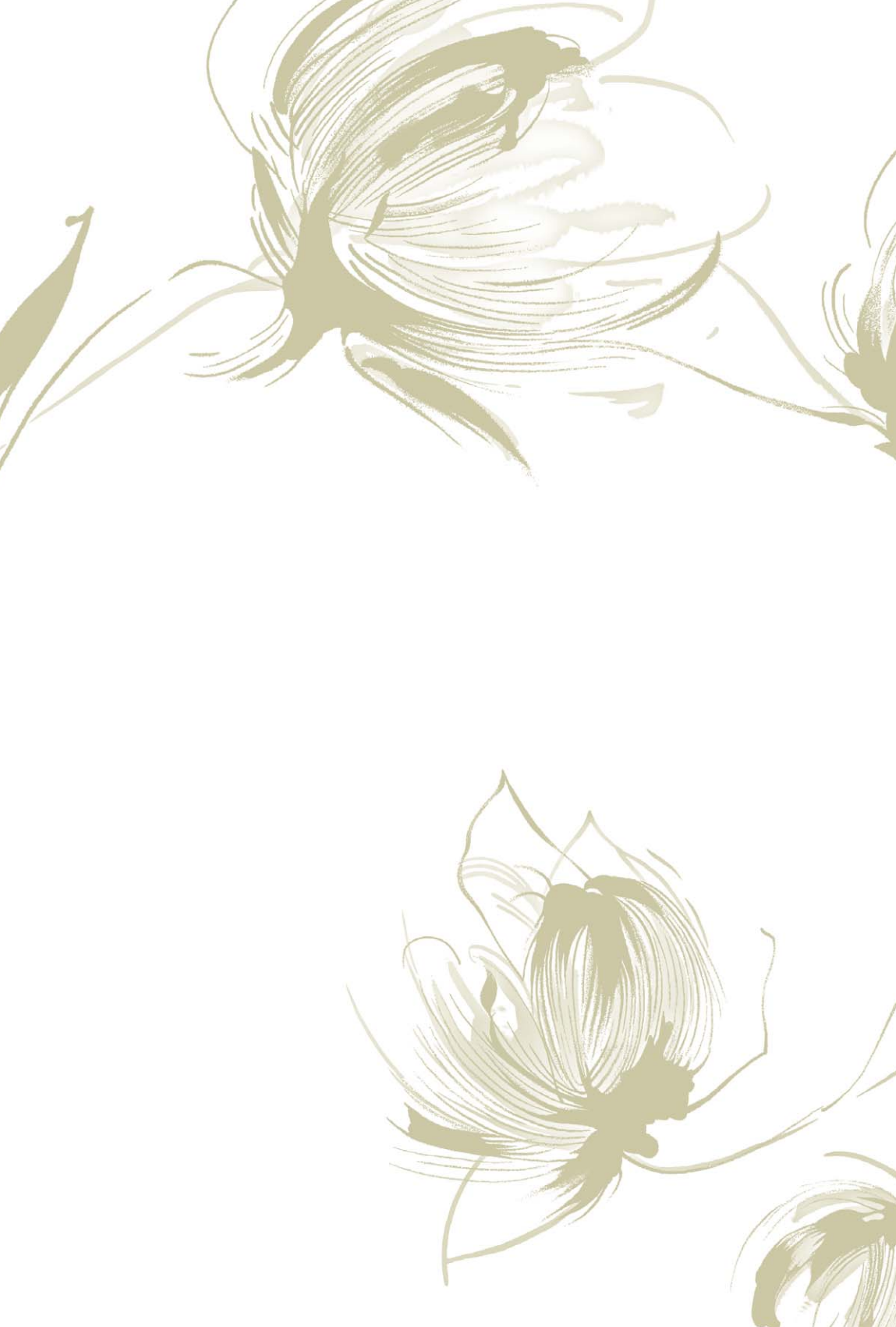


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01 Korea and the Korean People

Korea, the Land of Morning Calm

This affectionate term for Korea was first used by Percival Lowell (1855~1916), an American traveler, author, and astronomer who visited Korea about a century ago. The name was a literal interpretation of the word Chosŏn (Joseon, 조선 / 朝鮮, 1392~1910), the name of Korea at the time of his visit at the end of the 19th century. Lowell might have regarded this exotic and novel expression as a perfect name for the unknown kingdom which was yet to open its gates to the Western world.

The country might have been ‘unknown’ to the West, but it had in fact already enjoyed a long history. It was during the Koryŏ (Goryeo) dynasty over a millennium ago that the country first became known to the Western world, as is evident in the word “Korea,” which was derived from Koryŏ. It needs to be noted, however, that Korea was known in many foreign countries by the names of other dynasties. The ancestors of the Korean people developed and maintained their own culture as a major ethnic group in East Asia long before they began to be recognized outside the region in which they had settled.

When the first Westerners arrived in Chosŏn at the end of the 19th century, they realized that the country had developed and preserved a unique cultural heritage that was completely different from their own. They also found that the people of this little-known kingdom were very proud of their cultural achievements. These early Western visitors to Korea were fascinated by the uniqueness and freshness of the Korean lifestyle and culture. Korean people were also impressed by the foreign culture which was introduced by the Westerners.

The total land area of Korea, South and North, is just over 220,000 sq km, or roughly the same size as the island of Great Britain. It has a population of just over 70 million, a figure which is slightly larger than that of Britain or France, though smaller than that of Germany. For South Korea alone, the area is about 98,000 sq km and the population about 48 million.

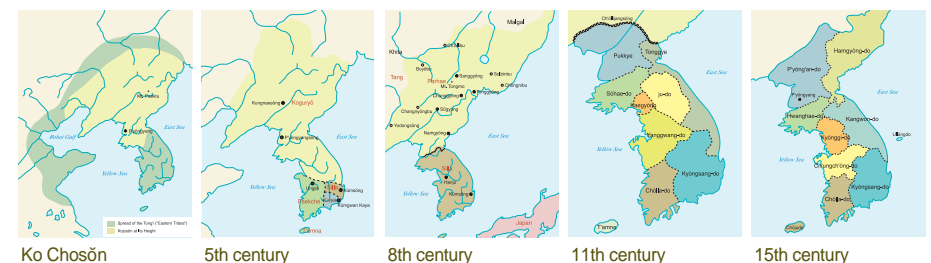


A United Community Even at the Dawn of History

The word “Chosŏn,” a name which refers to the first Korean state in history, first appeared in remote antiquity. According to the Samguk yusa, a Korean history book written in the 13th century, a state named Chosŏn had been founded about 4,300 years earlier by Tan’gun (Dangun). The ancient records of Tan’gun have long been regarded as a legend rather than an historical fact, and historians continue to offer differing views and interpretations of events and dates pertaining to Tan’gun and Old Chosŏn (Old Joseon) (a.k.a. Ko Chosŏn / Gojoseon) which were contained in such records. Although it is not possible to provide a conclusive argument in support of the existence of the founder of Korea, archaeological excavations have demonstrated that the Korean Peninsula and its vicinity were inhabited by humanity several hundreds of thousands of years ago. They have also discovered agricultural features and bronze artifacts dating back several thousands of years which some believe are directly related to the first Korean state in history.

Archeological finds and old records show that at the time a political entity with a common culture was in the process of formation and that the ancestors of the Korean people perceived themselves as clearly different from the Han Chinese in the west, the nomadic tribes in the north, and the Japanese in the southeast. Although the formation of a unified centralized state was a lengthy process, and the early inhabitants of the Korean peninsula lived in different political states, they perceived themselves as one people.

The early Korean kingdoms, like all other states bordering China at the time, looked to China for cultural inspiration and achievement, and were actively engaged in cultural exchange with neighboring states. China and Japan in particular contributing to the formation of a common cultural area based on the shared heritage of a writing system, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Close cultural cooperation and exchange between the two countries over a long period of time, however, could not keep the early Korean people from forming the perception that they constituted the core of a civilization which was essentially different from the one prevailing in China.



Dynamic Modern History

The Korean people were subjected to enormous political turmoil and turbulence when they reached the threshold of the modern era. Their efforts to build a nation state were frustrated by the imperialist expansion of Meiji Japan, which imposed a harsh 35-year colonial rule on Korea, from 1910 to 1945. Liberation came on August 15, 1945, after a long struggle for independence-only to lead to an intervention by foreign powers which resulted in national division and a tragic fratricidal civil war whose legacy of bitter suffering still lingers in the minds and rankles the hearts of the Korean people.

When the Korean War ended with a truce agreement in 1953, Korea remained one of the world's poorest countries. The national income was quite meager and was earned mainly from agriculture. The country was also deficient in democratic institutions. Despite the adverse circumstances, the Korean people drew inspiration from their long and proud history of overcoming ordeals imposed by outside forces. They fiercely resisted the brutal Japanese colonial rule and fought hard to recover their national sovereignty, destroy the "old systems," and build a modern nation state. The heroic struggle to

reemerge from the ruins of colonialism and war over the last several decades has finally led the Korean people to overcome the extreme poverty which gripped them for such a long time, and build a modern, industrialized state, underpinned by fully-fledged democratic institutions.

Today, Korean people find that the dramatic changes in recent times have brought with them a negative legacy which must be overcome. There is, first of all, the tragic division of the nation which was arbitrarily imposed upon them over 60 years ago. Then, there are various social and environmental concerns, the side-effects of the rapid pace of industrialization in Korea that commenced in the 1960s. Democracy, though effectively institutionalized, needs to be further consolidated in order to perform its true function and meaning.

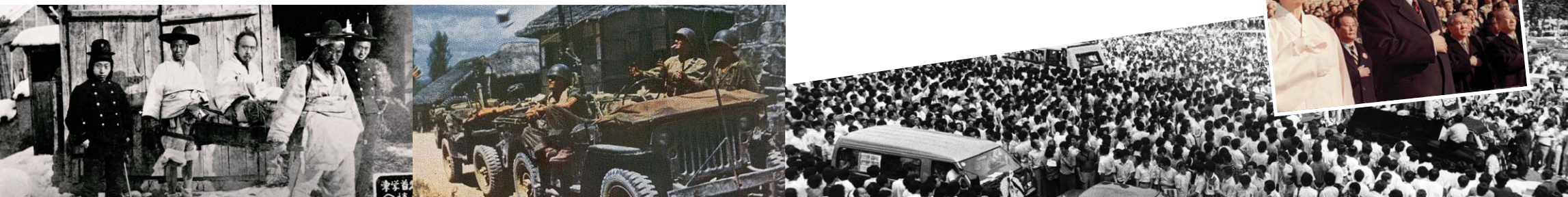
Aware that they still have far to go, Korean people are optimistic about their future. They are equipped with the rich experience of the vicissitudes of history, and are, therefore, confident that they will be able to continue to bring about dynamic change in their life and culture. The trials and tribulations of Korea's historical experience have made the Korean people philosopher-warriors who consider their future as yet another challenge and are steeled in their determination to overcome all adversities.

The Country

- 1876 Opened trade ports to Japan under the Treaty of Kanghwa (Ganghwa).
- 1894 The Tonghak (Donghak) Peasant Movement and the Kabo (Gabo) Reforms.
- 1910 Japanese annexation of Korea.
- 1919 The March the First Movement (or the 1919 Independence Movement), and the establishment of the Provisional Government of Korea in Exile.
- 1945 Liberation.
- 1948 The Establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).
- 1950 The Korean War (1950~53).
- 1960 The April 19th Revolution.
- 1962 The Economic Development Plans launched.
- 1980 The May Eighteenth Democratic Resistance.
- 1987 The June Democratic Resistance.
- 1995 Joined the OECD.
- 1997 The East Asian Financial Crisis. First ever victory of an opposition party candidate in the presidential elections.
- 2000 The South North Summit Meeting

The Outside

- 1905 The Russo-Japanese War
- 1914 The Outbreak of the First World War
- 1917 The Russian Revolution
- 1929 The Great Depression
- 1937 The Second Sino-Japanese War
- 1939 The Second World War (1939~45)
- 1947 The Cold War
- 1949 The Establishment of the People's Republic of China
- 1965 The Vietnam War
- 1973 The Establishment of Diplomatic relations between the US and China
- 1991 The collapse of the Soviet Union / The Gulf War





02 Beginnings of Korean History

Period 1st century BCE

Main Events The Neolithic Period (from about 8000 BCE), Establishment of Ko Chosŏn or Old Choson (2333 BCE), Establishment of early Korean kingdoms and chiefdoms (1st century BCE).

World Yellow River Civilization (2500 BCE), and the first unification of China by the Qin Dynasty (3rd century BCE).

Tan'gun(Dangun) and Ko Chosŏn(Go Joseon)

Korean people celebrate the third day of October as National Foundation Day. Called Kaech'ŏnjŏl (Gaecheonjeol), which literally means “the festival of the opening of heaven”. This national holiday commemorates the foundation of Chosŏn, the first Korean state to appear in history. The Samguk Yusa (or Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), a historic Korean text compiled in the 13th century, cites an ancient Chinese historical text and states that Chosŏn was founded in 2333 BCE by Tan'gun, the son of a the Lord of Heaven named Hwanung who had descended from heaven to the human world to govern the people.

Historians who accept the Samguk Yusa foundation date find it difficult to substantiate their thesis with concrete evidence. They find solace, however, in the fact that quite a few historical texts written by ancient Chinese historians contain records about the existence of Ko Chosŏn. They are also comforted by the discovery last century of a bronze culture in an area which is believed to have been part of Ko Chosŏn's territory.

The foundation date of Ko Chosŏn has always been an important topic of academic debate among historians in Korea and its neighboring countries. Korean people are particularly interested in this date because they believe, like their ancestors in the early Korean states who regarded themselves as legitimate successors of Ko Chosŏn, that they are descendants of Tan'gun. That is why Tan'gun and Ko Chosŏn have been established as the most widely acknowledged symbols of the identity of Korea and the Korean people.



Tan'gun, the Founding Father of Korea and the Korean People

Korea once used Tan'gun Era (Tan'gi / Dangi) as a national calendar that reckoned years from 2333 BCE, the reputed year of the foundation of the first Korean state by Tan'gun. According to the Samguk Yusa, Tan'gun was born to Hwanung, a son of the Lord of Heaven, and Ungnyŏ (Ungnyeo), a bear who was transformed into a woman, and founded and ruled Ko Chosŏn for over one thousand years.

When Did People First Inhabit the Korean Peninsula?



Handaxe of Chŏngok-Ni

Discovered at Yŏnch'ŏn (Yeoncheon) in the midlands of the Korean Peninsula, this hand-axe is a characteristic stone artifact representing the oldest period of the Paleolithic Age. The first hand-axe ever discovered in East Asia, this stone tool helped revise the conventional theory that the Lower Paleolithic Age can be divided into two distinct types, that of Africa and Europe, which was based on the hand-axe, and that of East Asia, which was characterized by choppers and chopping tools.

Archaeological data testify that the Korean Peninsula and its vicinity began to be inhabited by people long before the advent of Tan'gun and his foundation of Korea's first state. Archaeologists have discovered a large number of relics from the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods, including chipped stone tools made and used over five hundred thousand years ago.

With the end of the last Ice Age about ten thousand years ago, the Korean Peninsula became part of the temperate zone which is characterized by the distinct changes of the four seasons. It was in this period that the Neolithic people who settled on the Korean Peninsula and its contiguous areas began to manufacture polished stone implements and coarse earthenware, and to build pit dwellings which formed villages. The techniques of hunting, gathering and fishing became further developed and the idea of farming also evolved and spread far and wide in the course of time.

Ancient Chinese historical texts refer to an ethnic group named the Yemaek (Ch. Huimo) which succeeded in establishing itself on the northern Korean Peninsula and Manchuria, engaging in farming and cattle raising. These people, different from the nomadic people inhabiting the grasslands to the north of the Great Wall of China, were later assimilated into the Korean people.



Comb pattern pottery, from excavation at Amsa-dong

Chosŏn(Joseon) Cultural Independence from China

Archaeologists discovered a large number of relics and artifacts at the dwelling sites of the Yemaek, showing that these early Korean tribes were actively engaged in farming by 4000 BCE. One of the most famous discoveries made so far consists of half-burnt grains found in the vicinity of P'yŏngyang (Pyeongyang), the current capital city of North Korea, which was the political and cultural center of Ko Chosŏn during its final era.

Agricultural development and the growth of settlements on the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria led to the integration of tribes and the foundation of states of various sizes. The introduction of bronze metalworking to the region between 2000 BCE and 1500 BCE accelerated that process. The legend about the foundation of Ko Chosŏn Hwanung's descent from heaven and foundation of a state which was allied with native forces reflects this historical process.

Early Chinese historical records attest to the fact that the existence of Ko Chosŏn was widely acknowledged in China during its early history. By the 7th century, Ko Chosŏn had established an active trading relationship with many of the early Chinese states. It continued to grow and in the period between the 5th and 3rd centuries, emerged as a major power in the region, having assimilated most of the Yaemaek tribal political entities scattered around it.

Ko Chosŏn's emergence as a major power in the region had inevitably led it into political clashes with the Han Dynasty which had reunified China and transformed itself into one of the greatest empires in Chinese history. In 109 BCE, Ko Chosŏn was invaded by a 50,000-strong Han army. It lost the capital and then the entire state, despite a fierce year-long resistance. The Han established four commanderies in the former Ko Chosŏn territory, but thanks to the tenacious resistance of the Korean people they were soon expelled from the peninsula.

Pip'ahyŏng Tonggŏm

Called Pip'ahyŏng Tonggŏm (Bipahyeong Donggeom or "Mandolin-shaped Bronze Dagger") by archaeologists, bronze tools discovered in both the Liaoning area, Manchuria and on the Korean Peninsula are known to have been made by the Yemaek tribes, whom many historians consider to be the founders of Ko Chosŏn. The distinctive shape of the bronze dagger significantly differs from the bronze daggers found in China, demonstrating the difference between the Korean and Chinese bronze cultures. The political center of Ko Chosŏn during the later period was P'yŏngyang, the present-day capital of North Korea, and the official name of North Korea includes "Chosŏn," the name of the first Korean state.



Heaven Worshippers

The founders of Ko Chosŏn believed that they were the descendants of the Lord of Heaven. They admired their leader as the progeny of Hwanung, the son of the Lord of Heaven who descended from Heaven to preside over the affairs of this world whom they worshipped as the holiest of beings.

"They perform sacrificial rites to deities every fifth month after sowing seed in the fields. They gather together and dance, sing and drink, carousing day and night. They observe the same ritual in the tenth month after harvest." (Sanguozhi, or Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms)

The above quotation taken from a famous Chinese historical record is a depiction of the life of people in the states that emerged in the southern part of the Korean Peninsula after the fall of Ko Chosŏn.

The Han commanderies were able to maintain their influence only in Ko Chosŏn's capital and its closest surrounds. The rest of the former territory of Ko Chosŏn was put under the control of other political entities that had gained and expanded their power even before the fall of Ko Chosŏn, most notably Puyŏ (Buyeo) in the north and Chin (Jin) in the south. The collapse of Ko Chosŏn led to the emergence of other local powers who formed an independent political body through political bargaining with, or resistance against, the Han commanderies. The new political situation that unfolded in Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula as the first century BCE dawned has been dubbed by some historians as the Period of Multiple States, in which the former Ko Chosŏn territory was divided into numerous tribal states and kingdoms of varying sizes.



Korea in the First Common Era (Tribal States Period)

The fall of Ko Chosŏn was followed by the emergence of numerous new states in Manchuria and on the Korean Peninsula. Manchuria and the northern part of the Korean Peninsula saw Puyŏ, Koguryŏ (Goguryeo), Okchŏ (Okjeo) and Tongye (Dongye), while the south of the peninsula was divided into 78 tribal states that formed three confederations under the names, Mahan, Chinhan (Jinhan) and Pyŏnhan (Byeonhan).

The founders of these states also regarded themselves as the descendants of heaven. The rulers of Koguryŏ, for instance, asserted that Chumong (Jumong), the founder of their kingdom, was the grandson of the Lord of Heaven and the maternal grandson of river-god. Ancient records also show that the people of Puyŏ gathered together every twelfth month of the year and performed sacrificial rites for the Lord of Heaven. Other states performed similar rites and festivals. The development of agriculture in East Asia resulted in the establishment of a tradition of worshipping heaven as the source of a plentiful harvest and affluence. Rulers maintained that they were the descendants of the heavenly god and tried to communicate with their ancestors in heaven through sacrificial rites.

Earth or, more generally, nature was an object of worship for most Korean people in their early history. They believed that the Earth was the mother of all living things. And as they held that inherent in all natural objects or phenomena around them, including mountains and rivers, was a divine spirit, they tried to maintain a harmonious relationship with these by offering seasonal sacrificial rites. The tradition of nature worship as a means to find harmony with their surrounding environment became an integral part of Korea's cultural heritage which the Korean people have preserved to this day.

Land of Dolmens

The early Ko Chosŏn era in Korean history is often linked to the megalithic monuments called dolmen that are distributed over the entire Korean Peninsula and Manchuria. Known to have been built as tombs for political leaders, each of these stone structures consists of two or more upright stones supporting a large, and usually flat, capstone. The burial chamber formed by the capstone and the supporting stones were used for the placement of the body of the deceased along with some of their belongings. Stone monuments of this type are rarely found in Chinese archaeological sites. Archaeologists have also ascertained that these megalithic tombs were also used as altars for sacrificial rites to the heavenly Lord, probably because they were regarded as a meeting point between heaven and humanity via the death of a heavenly descendant.

Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula contain the world's largest dolmen complex sites, and those in Koch'ang, Hwasun and Kanghwa in Korea were designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2000.



Southern style dolmen (left), dolmens of Kanghwa island
Dolmens in Korea generally followed two pattern : Northern style dolmen was constructed by placing several supporting prop stones in a rough square and covering them with a large capstone, while Southern style dolmen, looking like a baduk, was built by using a large boulder as a capstone placed atop several smaller rocks.



Fine Linear Design Mirror (left), Bronze Bell

For the ancient Korean people, sacrificial rites constituted an important political activity that aimed to consolidate social harmony and promote a sense of community. The bronze artifacts shown here are types of ritual vessels used during the Bronze and Early Iron Age.



03 Origins of the Ancient Korean States and Early Civilization

Period 1st~7th century CE

Main Events Growth of Paekche (Baekje) (mid 4th century), Rise of Koguryŏ (early 5th century), Silla's exploration of the midlands of the Korean Peninsula (6th century)

World Establishment of the Roman Empire (1st century CE), Era of Disunity (4th~6th century)

The Three Kingdoms Period

The Korean Peninsula and Manchuria experienced immense political upheaval between the 1st and the 6th centuries. In the north, Koguryŏ continued to develop into a major power in the region through competition and conflict with Puyŏ, while in the south various tribal states coalesced to form the confederated states of Paekche (18 BCE~660), Silla (57 BCE~935) and Kaya (Gaya, 1st c.~562). The fierce competition between these entities in the 5th and 6th centuries finally led to the emergence of the three kingdoms of Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla.

Each of the three kingdoms formed a society based on a highly-developed agricultural economy. In Koguryŏ, foxtail millet and giant millet were the most important items of agricultural produce, although rice farming was also practiced in the south and in the coastal areas. In Paekche and Silla, rice farming was more widely practiced, even from the early period.



1st century



mid 4th century



mid 5th century



Gilt Bronze Incense Burner of Paekche (6th c.)

An outstanding work of art from Paekche, the appearance of this gilt bronze incense burner reflects the influence of Buddhism and Daoism. In the three kingdoms period, Buddhism and Daoism happily coexisted with traditional folk religions.

In all three kingdoms, the economy largely depended upon production by farmers who personally owned small farms, although some members of the royalty and the aristocracy also owned large farms and ran them by exploiting slave labor. Government expenses were met by taxation and compulsory labor which was exacted from commoners.

It was during the period between the 4th and 6th centuries that each of the three kingdoms developed into a strongly centralized kingdom that allowed a greater concentration of power in the hands of a king. The process of the formation of centralized states centered on monarchical authority received further stimulus due to increased military threat from China and the northern tribes and the intensification of competition and conflict amongst the three kingdoms.

Once the three kingdoms had developed into a centralized state, they adopted political systems from China that had been developed over a long period of time along with the Confucian ideology that formed the basis of the systems. It was also during this period that Buddhism was introduced from China to the three Korean kingdoms. Once it became accepted, Buddhism spread rapidly, and not just among the ruling elites but among the common people as well, leading to the efflorescence of Buddhist culture and art.

The three kingdoms grew through repeated conflicts with the Chinese states which ceaselessly attempted to expand their influence over Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula. Despite the tension and conflict that continued between the two parties, the three Korean kingdoms were eager to adopt new civilizations from China, although they were equally keen to develop and preserve their own cultural heritage and traditions, including, for instance, folk religion.

The spread and acceptance of Buddhism

The three kingdoms were introduced to Mahayana ("Great Vehicle") Buddhism via China. The rulers of each kingdom worshiped Buddha as a protector and presiding deity of the royalty and the state, while common people were attracted towards Buddha for his healing power and blessing, and in the hope of gaining entry into the Pure Land after death.



Paekche(Baekje), a Powerful Maritime Kingdom

One of the three early Korean kingdoms, Paekche was established in the west midlands of the Korean Peninsula, the current location of Seoul. It started as a confederation of tribal states, but rapidly grew into a centralized kingdom owing to a wide, fertile plain of large arable fields around the Han River which was sufficient to sustain a large population.

Defeated in a major conflict with Koguryō in the early 5th century, Paekche had to move its capital to the south, to today's Gongju (Gongju), and then to Puyo. The wide, fertile agricultural plains around the new capitals helped the kingdom to continue to prosper. According to a census report, compiled in the 7th century, Paekche had a population of approximately 3.5 million, similar to that of Koguryō, although the territory of the latter was much larger.

Paekche engaged in exchange with numerous Chinese states and forged a close relationship with Japan early in history. While all of the three kingdoms were actively engaged in cultural exchange with Japan, it was Paekche that inspired and strongly influenced Japan's cultural development. According to ancient records, Paekche sent Confucian scholars, Buddhist priests and skilled artisans to Japan, where they introduced Chinese classical texts, Confucianism, Buddhism, and various aspects of practical knowledge. Their activities in Japan were of seminal significance to the cultural efflorescence of the Asuka period.



Paekche Avalokitesvara of Hōryūji Temple's Main hall

This prayer hall in the precinct of Hōryūji, a Japanese temple established in the 7th century, is the oldest surviving wooden building in Japan to have been marked by the architectural style of Paekche. The building also shows characteristic elements of the Buddhist architecture of the period. The statue on the right is Paekche's Avalokitesvara, which was enshrined in the temple.



Koguryō(Goguryeo), the Strongest Contender in the North

Founded in 37 BCE along the middle reaches of the Amnokkang (Amnokgang, Yalu River), Koguryō fast grew into a major regional power as it struggled with the nomadic tribes in northwest Manchuria. Between the late 4th and early 5th centuries, Koguryō was able to expel the Han Chinese and the nomadic tribes from both the Korean Peninsula and the Liaodong region. The kingdom then turned its attention southward and wrested from Paekche the Han River valley, situated in the middle of the peninsula.

The remarkable success of the kingdom's military expeditions continued until the early 5th century. Koguryō was thus transformed into the most formidable power in the region. Its rulers regarded themselves as the descendants of heaven and their kingdom as the center of the universe.

Koguryō was also engaged in a process of cultural exchange with the neighboring states established by the Han Chinese and various non Han nomadic tribes in the north. A brisk exchange with its neighbors helped Koguryō create a rich and colorful cultural heritage based on the ideologies of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism and other religious belief-systems and philosophical schools.

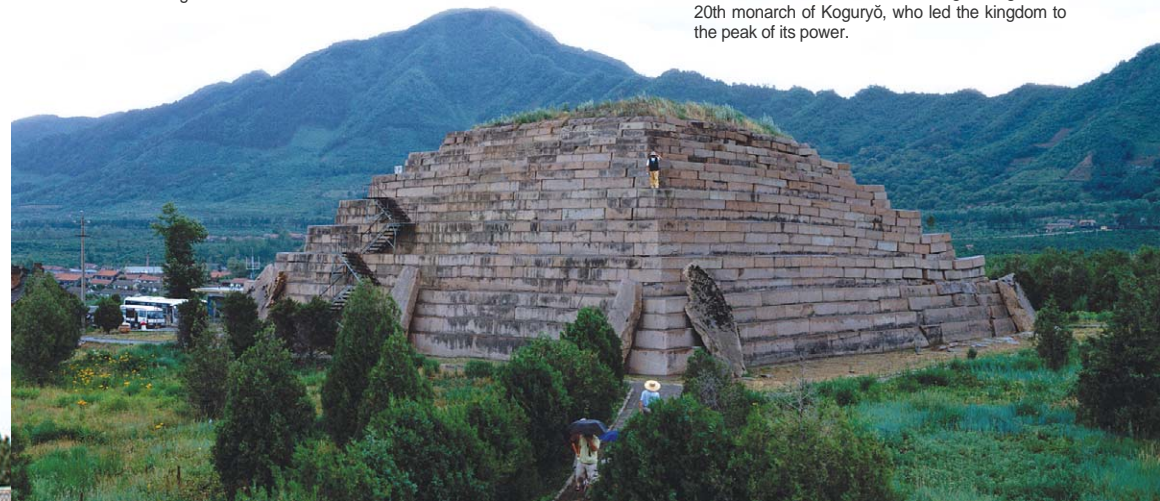


King Kwanggaet'o Stele

This monolith (6.39 meters in height) was erected in 414 by King Changsu of Koguryō to honor the heroic achievements of his deceased father, King Kwanggaet'o (Gwanggaeto). The monument contains an inscription praising the "Great King" as one who brought peace to the world through his military campaigns. The inscription supports the view that Koguryō, which had evolved into a major power receiving tribute from neighboring states, regarded itself as the center of the universe.

Tomb of the General

This pyramidal structure built with large, dressed stone blocks measures approximately 13 meters in height and 33 meters along each side of the base. It is believed to be the tomb of King Changsu, the 20th monarch of Koguryō, who led the kingdom to the peak of its power.



Silla, the Land of Buddha

The greatest period for Silla came in the 6th century. Founded in the southeast of the Korean Peninsula in the first century BCE, Silla remained the weakest of the three Korean kingdoms up until the early 6th century, whereupon it began to grow rapidly on the strength of a series of political reforms.

In the mid 6th century, Silla rulers launched ambitious military expeditions to expand their territory with the avowed objective of realizing the ideals of the Buddha on the earth. They annexed the tribal states of Kaya to take the wide, fertile fields of the Nakdonggang (Nakdonggang) River, proceeded further west to strike Paekche, and then turned northward to attack Koguryŏ. Their success in the military campaigns against Paekche and Koguryŏ gave Silla the huge, fertile lands of the Han River and a strategic base for further advance into the midlands of the Korean Peninsula.

In the 6th and 7th centuries, Silla rulers sought to forge linkages between their lineage and the clan of the Buddha, built temples of monumental significance and regularly held large scale Buddhist rituals. It was also in this period that the members of Silla aristocracy began to travel to China in order to delve deep into Buddhism under the guidance of Chinese masters.



Silla Tombs and Gold Crowns

The extant gold artifacts of Silla exhibit the outstanding artistic skills of Silla's metalworkers whose craftsmanship later fascinated the outside world, including Arabia, where the kingdom was admired as the Land of Gold. Silla also left behind a number of magnificent royal tombs, each with a burial chamber containing valuable funerary objects which were intended for use in the afterlife by the deceased royals.



Return of Koguryŏ(Goguryeo) after Sixteen Hundred Years - Koguryŏ (Goguryeo) Tombs and Mural Paintings

It was from the mid 4th century onwards that Koguryŏ people built massive tombs for their royals and their powerful aristocrats around Kungnaesŏng (Gungnaeseong) and P'yŏngyang, the kingdom's second and third capital cities. The tombs are largely divided into two types : stone-mound tombs and earthen-mound tombs, with a tunnel entrance and stone chamber. It is the second type, graced with precious mural paintings, depicting various aspects of the lifestyle led by ancient Korean people in this part of the region, that most fascinates people today.

The early mural paintings were largely inspired by events from everyday life and traditional folk religion, although their themes were gradually extended to include Buddhist and Daoist elements. The tomb murals of the latter period, painted between the 6th and the 7th centuries, were largely based on Daoist ideology. Many of these Koguryŏ mural tombs were listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO in 2004.



Koguryŏ tomb mural

A scene from the Tomb of the Dancers, located in Jian district of China



04 Southern and Northern States and Buddhism

Period 6th~7th century CE to 9th century CE

Main Events Koguryō Sui War (612), Fall of Paekche (660), Fall of Koguryō (668), Foundation of Parhae (Balhae) (698), Construction of Pulguksa (Bulguksa) Temple (755)

World Establishment of Islam by Muhammad (610), Foundation of the Tang Dynasty (618), Frankish Empire unified by Charlemagne (771)

East Asia in Turmoil

The expansion of Silla to the area around the Han River intensified the tripartite conflict between the three kingdoms. Meanwhile, the unification of China by the Sui Dynasty (589~618) and its open threat to invade Koguryō, rendered the political situation in East Asia more complex, increasing the possibility of an international war.

The first invasion of Koguryō by Sui took place in 598, and further invasions designed to break up Koguryō's political influence upon the region ensued. The largest invasion took place in 612 when the Sui emperor Yangdi led a vast army of over one million men, only to encounter a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Korean kingdom whose entire population numbered no more than 3.5 million.

The Chinese campaign to conquer Koguryō was continued in 645 by the Tang Dynasty, successor to the Sui Dynasty. The Tang invasions were also effectively repelled by the brave army of Koguryō. The repeated failure of its efforts to subdue Koguryō led Tang to seek an alliance with Silla. Silla was acutely aware of the significance of such a breakthrough which was essential for overcoming the military pressure of Paekche and Koguryō.



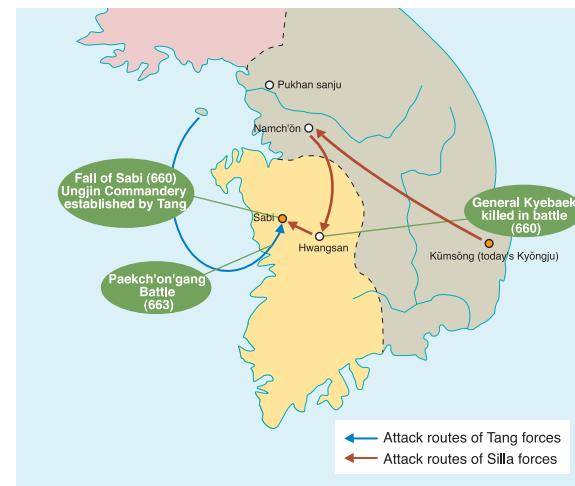
Koguryō warriors on horseback depicted in tomb murals

The Period of Southern and Northern States

In 660, Silla's 50,000-strong army crossed the border into Paekche while a 130,000-strong Tang force struck Paekche from the West Sea. The allied forces swept into the capital of Paekche and subjugated the entire kingdom (660). The Silla Tang allies then pushed northward and continued a series of full-scale attacks on Koguryō for eight more years. The kingdom of Koguryō finally fell in 668.

For Silla, the fall of Koguryō meant the end of the peninsular war, but for Tang it represented a stepping stone to realize its hidden agenda, namely the colonization of the entire peninsula. Fiercely opposed to any such move, Silla entered the war with Tang while supporting the movement for the restoration of Koguryō.

The struggle between Silla and Tang continued for eight more years until 676, whereupon Silla finally drove the Tang forces out of the southern part of the Korean Peninsula, following victories in battles fought both on land and at sea. In the meantime, a former Koguryō general named Tae Choyōng (Dae Joyeong) led a military expedition against Tang, and founded Parhae in 698 in the former Koguryō territory. His new kingdom was joined by the surviving members of the Koguryō elite. Parhae succeeded in recovering most of the territory that had been under the rule of Koguryō before it fell in 668. With the final victory of Silla and Parhae in the war with Tang, the Korean people were able to retain the territory of the Three Kingdoms in Manchuria and on the Korean Peninsula in their tight grip, thereby maintaining their political and cultural independence from China.



The wars staged in East Asia in the late 7th century may well be remembered as the Great East Asian Wars. The fall of Paekche led Japan to form a backing force to support the Paekche Restoration Movement. The Battle of Paekch'ŏn River in 663 between the joint Silla-Tang army and the Japanese forces resulted in the crippling defeat of the latter.

Historical Significance of the Unification of the Three Kingdoms

The fall of Paekche and Koguryŏ, and Silla's victory in the war with Tang, finally brought about a much desired spell of peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. A period of social stability and economic growth followed the tumultuous period of war. The people of the three kingdoms who had been enemies on the battlefields now mixed with each other as fellow countrymen and women, sharing the same language and similar customs. Although far from perfect, the unification of the three early Korean kingdoms was a major milestone in the formation of a united and culturally cohesive population on the Korean peninsula.

The Silla rulers, proud of their success in unifying the three Korean kingdoms, willingly employed aristocrats of the former Paekche and Koguryŏ elites as Silla officials, and treated the commoners of the three kingdoms in a fair and equal manner. While Silla did not start the war with the aim of unifying the three kingdoms, that war ultimately resulted in binding the people of three ancient Korean kingdoms with a common historical experience under one political system. The advent of the Unified Silla period may, therefore, be regarded as forming the origins of the Korean people in the later periods.



Southern and Northern States Period
Silla annexed Paekche and part of Koguryŏ's territory and people, while in the north Parhae recovered most of the former Koguryŏ territory.

Reorganization of the Ruling System

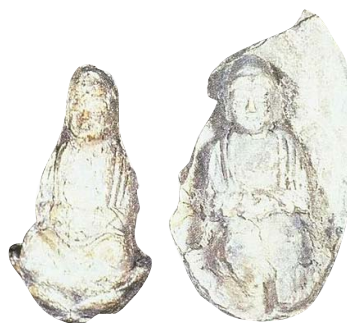
The victory of Silla in the wars that ended the Three Kingdoms Period greatly strengthened the authority of the Silla monarchy. The rulers of the new, greater Silla now actively harnessed Confucian ideas, stressing the importance of loyalty, adopted Confucian texts for the education of the people, and introduced a system by which officials were selected according to their capability. They also established a system that significantly strengthened the authority of the central administration over the regions.

Meanwhile, the rulers of Parhae often made it clear that they were the legitimate successors to Koguryŏ. They liked to use the title "King of Koguryŏ" in their diplomatic relationships with neighboring states, although the title was also used in an effort to enhance social solidarity, since a sizeable section of Parhae's population was derived from the erstwhile kingdom of Koguryŏ.

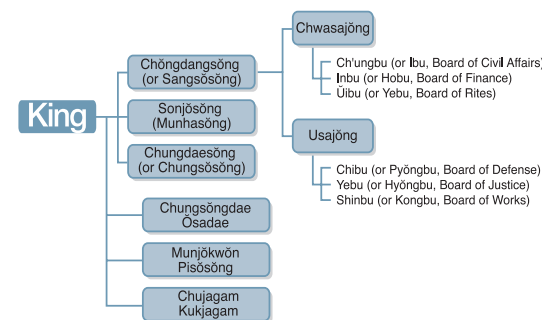
This does not mean, however, that Parhae merely represented a rejuvenation of Koguryŏ which had perished. Parhae rulers adopted Confucian political ideas to consolidate their political authority and borrowed the Tang Dynasty's system of governance in order to develop their own political institutions.

Both in Silla and in Parhae, higher government positions were open only to powerful aristocrats, while the majority of the population was composed of the lower classes and included slaves. Education systems were further developed in both kingdoms, as was the system of recruiting government on the basis of the candidate's merit and ability. The traditional system of hierarchy, however, remained firmly in place.

Buddha image from Parhae



Central government organization of Parhae



The structure of Parhae's central government comprised three departments and six ministries, a system developed by the Chinese Tang Dynasty. Silla, as well as Japan and many other East Asian states, imported the Chinese dynasty's system of government. The Buddhist image of Parhae on the right exhibits the characteristic features of Koguryŏ's Buddhist statues.

Expansion of International Exchange in the Southern and Northern States Period

The relationship between Silla and Parhae was more hostile than friendly. Silla was obliged to send its troops in support of Tang when the latter launched a large scale military campaign against Parhae, and Tang eagerly tried to exploit to its advantage the tense relationship between the two Korean kingdoms as a means to securing stability along its borderlands.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the two was not always tense. Records show that Silla regularly sent diplomatic missions to Parhae, and the cultural and economic exchange between Silla and Parhae was rather brisk, owing to the special route linking the two states. Meanwhile, Parhae was more interested in maintaining a friendly relationship with Japan as a strategic countermeasure to the possible forging of a Silla Tang alliance. Parhae regularly sent envoys to Heian Japan, and sought an active trade partnership.

But the Silla Japan relationship could not be friendly either. Both had fought each other as arch enemies at the Battle of Paekch'on'gang in which the fate of Paekche as an independent state was sealed. Similarly, Silla continued to ignore and effectively turn down the repeated demands of Japan to establish a tributary relationship between the two.

A stone lantern from a Parhae temple



A graphic sketch of the capital of Parhae



Chang Pogo (? ~846)
A famous maritime and political figure of Silla, Chang Pogo is introduced in many historic records as originating not just from Korea but also from China and Japan. The records portray him as a central figure in the international maritime trade taking place on Korea's southwestern seas in the early 9th century.

Silla and Parhae maintained a close diplomatic relationship with Tang, a Chinese imperial dynasty that achieved the world's highest level of civilization between the 7th and 9th centuries, exerting great influence upon the neighboring states. Silla and Parhae were actively adopting certain of Tang's cultural achievements through the dispatch of officials and students to China. Trade between Silla and Tang grew rapidly, too. An increase in the number of Silla migrants led to the establishment of concentrations of Silla residents such as the Sillabang (Township of Silla Residents) in China, while some of the Silla people became Tang officials and played an important part in the political life of China. One of the most successful Silla migrants in Tang was Chang Pogo (Jang Bogo) who served the Tang court as an official before rising to become a powerful maritime figure, effectively controlling the maritime trade routes linking Silla, Tang and Japan, an achievement for which he was dubbed "Lord of the Seas".

In addition to diplomats, Silla was also frequently visited by foreign merchants not just from Japan and Tang China but also from such far-flung regions as Arabia. This vibrant process of exchange between the peoples of the two Korean states and visitors from numerous foreign states guided the Korean people to rich and varied cultural achievements from across the region, helping them to forge a creative culture.

Pottery traded by Chang Pogo (left), Chang Pogo's trading ship (model)
The pottery work on the right is known to have been made by Chang Pogo, using pottery skills imported from Tang, and was an important trade item of his time.



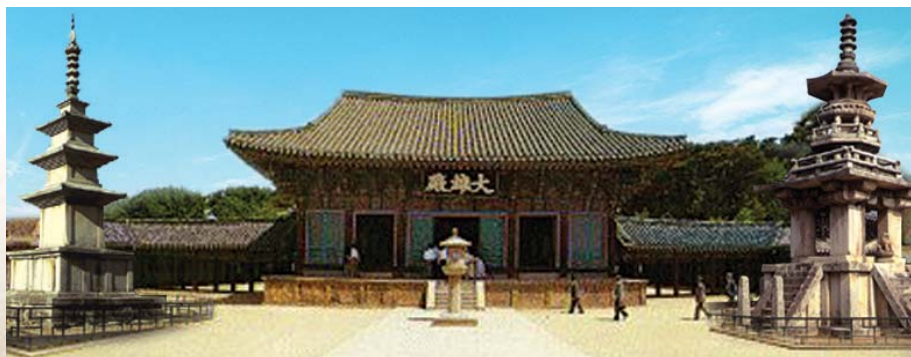
Development of Buddhism

In Korea, Buddhism developed into a popular religion between the 7th and 9th centuries. The rulers of Silla actively promoted the construction of Buddhist temples across their kingdom, and spread among the people the idea that rebirth in the Western Pure Land is achieved by all those who invoke the name of either Amitabha or Avalokitesvara.

The expansion of Buddhism in Silla resulted in the establishment of numerous Buddhist temples across the country. There were, as can be seen in the example of Mt. Namsan in Kyōngju (Gyeongju), the Silla capital, mountains packed with Buddhist images carved into the rock by common worshippers yearning for liberation from all suffering.

Silla Buddhism in the 8th century is characterized by the construction of magnificent temple buildings inspired by intense religious passion and undergirded by a period of peace and prosperity within the state. Pulguksa, or the “Temple of Buddha Land,” is often regarded as the most distinguished specimen of the Buddhist architecture of this era. The temple contains two of Korea’s greatest architectural structures remaining today : Sōkkat’ap (Seokgatap), a pagoda honoring Shakyamuni who is the historic Buddha, and Tabot’ap (Dabotap), a pagoda built for Prabhutaratna, one of the Buddhas of the past who had prophesied the advent of the historical Buddha.

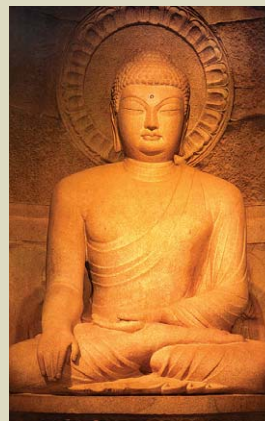
The prosperity of Buddhism in Silla resulted in the spread of Buddhist rites, ceremonies and other practices into the lives of the common people and often mixed with Silla’s traditional beliefs, customs and lifestyle. Buddhism’s tolerance led to a happy coexistence with traditional folk religions, even to the extent of accepting various folk deities into its pantheon.



Kyōngju Pulguksa

This great Buddhist temple, built in 755, is located in Kyōngju. The builders of the temple believed that their country, Silla, should be a Buddhist kingdom and gave the temple the name Pulguksa (lit. Temple of the Land of Buddha) which it retains to this day.

Sōkkuram (Seokguram), Gem of Silla Buddhism



Sōkkuram

This image of Sakyamuni, enshrined here as the principal Buddha and standing 326cm in height (with a 160cm-high pedestal), was made from a single granite block.

Sōkkuram, literally “Stone Cave Hermitage,” is a Buddhist grotto built in the mid 8th century to enshrine a fine stone image of Buddha and his guardians. Along with the Pulguksa Temple, Sōkkuram is today regarded as one of Silla’s two greatest architectural works. According to Samguk Sagi (The History of the Three Kingdoms), both of these temples were built by a Silla chancellor named Kim Taesōng (Kim Daeseong) to honor his parents in this world (Pulguksa) and in the former life (Sōkkuram).

An exquisite Buddhist shrine built by carving hard granite rock, Sōkkuram contains a superb image of the principal Buddha, watched over by a group of about 40 guardians, his disciples, and bodhisattvas. Experts have revealed that the builders of the temple exploited the latest skill and technological sophistication in architecture and sculpture. The temple’s superb sculptural works arouse a sense of awe in the visitor.

Sōkkuram is national treasure no. 24, and has been designated as a Unesco World Heritage Site.



Upper niches of the wall contain seated figures of Bodhisattvas, surrounding the image of Sakyamuni .



05 Koryŏ(Goryeo), Development of a Centralized Kingdom

Period 9th~12th century

Main Events Fall of Parhae (926), Unification of the Later Three Kingdoms by Koryŏ (936), Establishment of the Civil Examination System (958), War with the Khitan (998~1019)

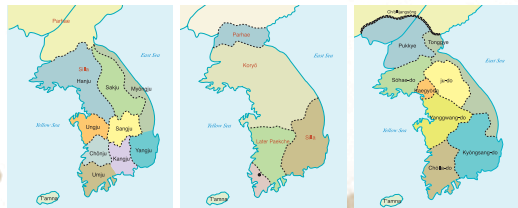
World Establishment of the Song Dynasty (960), The 1st Crusade (1096), Northern Song defeated by the Jin Dynasty (1127)

Koryŏ(Goryeo) the End of a Turbulent Era

In the late 9th century, both Silla and Parhae were thrown into turmoil. In Silla, the internal conflict over succession to the throne intensified among the aristocracy, which resulted in serious political unrest, peasant revolts and the rise of regional warlords, bringing the kingdom to the brink of a full-scale civil war. In the north, Parhae faced a major crisis in the form of military pressure of Liao, the newly established state of the Khitan.

The harmony of Korean unification achieved by Silla began to break up in the early 10th century when movements to restore Paekche and Koguryŏ led to the establishment of Later Paekche and Later Koguryŏ, ushering into the Later Three Kingdoms Period. Meanwhile, the northern state of Parhae collapsed following invasion by the Khitan (926).

This era of turbulence came to an end with the emergence of Koryŏ, a dynasty founded by a regional warlord named Wang Kŏn. The new Korean dynasty expanded the opportunities for regional warlords to participate in the politics of the central government, thereby effectively exceeding the limitations of Silla, while only a small number of ruling elites monopolized political power. Koryŏ's rulers regarded their kingdom as the legitimate successor to Koguryŏ, generously accepted refugees from Parhae, and began to seriously consider launching military expeditions with a view to expanding its territory to the north. In terms of its significance in Korea history, the rise of Koryŏ meant the end of the Southern and Northern States Period and the beginning of the period of true Korean unification.



The Silla Unification → the establishment of Koryŏ → the process of the expansion of northern territory to 1,000-ri wall.

Wang Kŏn's Tomb in Kaesŏng (Gaeseong)

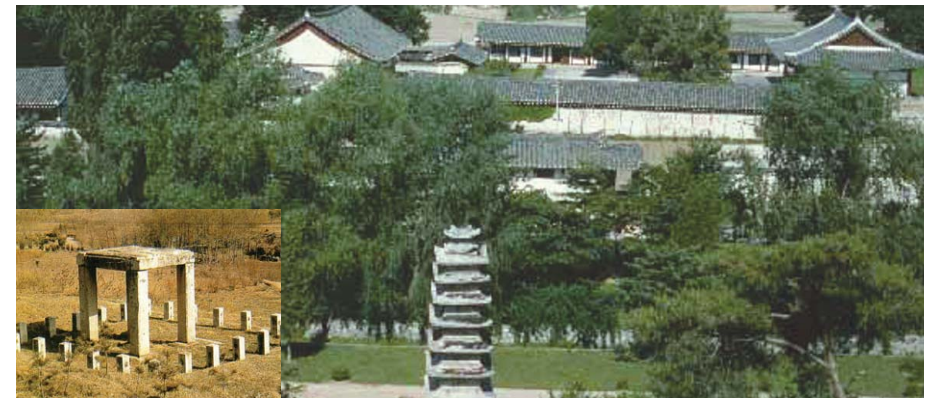
As a dynasty that always actively struggled to restore the northern territory, Koryŏ waged war with the Khitan in the early 11th century, eventually pushing them further north towards the Amnokkang (Yalu) River. The grave on the right is Wang Kŏn's tomb in Kaesŏng, his hometown, which later became the capital city of Koryŏ.

Establishment of Advanced Government Systems

In 958 Koryŏ adopted the civil examination system, which had been productively used to select capable officials by the Sui and Tang dynasties in China. The reform abolished the tradition of appointing people to high-ranking positions according to their meritorious contributions to the foundation of the dynasty and the recommendation of prominent aristocrats. The criteria for selection was now talent and merit.

Soon thereafter educational institutions offering intermediate and advanced courses on the Confucian classics, history and literature, forming part of the civil examination curriculum, were established. The system of placing more importance on a candidate's knowledge and capability rather than on his lineage reduced the political influence of the aristocracy while enhancing and consolidating monarchical authority. A king now came to be regarded as one destined to rule over the people according to the mandate of heaven, and loyalty to the ruler became the highest of all virtues among a king's subjects.

The goal of the new political system was to take care of people's lives and, accordingly, Koryŏ rulers actively engaged in promoting knowledge of science and technology in order to increase productivity. They established schools and government offices, offering various educational programs on astronomy, geography, math, medicine, law and foreign languages, thus helping ordinary people to explore a political career through education. The fervent interest in education among Koryŏ's rulers played an important role in helping their subjects acquire a relatively high level of scientific and technical knowledge.



Established in 992 as the highest educational institution of Koryŏ, the Kukchagam (Gukjagam) offered advanced courses on the Confucian classics and various practical subjects. The picture shows a Koryŏ building, the Sŏnggyun'gwan (Seonggyun'gwan), which has survived to the present day in Kaesŏng. The photo on the right features the site of an astronomical observatory known as ch'ŏmsŏngdae (cheomseongdae), also built in Kaesŏng. Historical records testify that during the Three Kingdoms Period the Korean people actively engaged in astronomical observation which was facilitated by the government. The state maintained a bureau to supervise astronomical activities and facilities.

Diversity within Unity

Silla's disintegration into the Later Three Kingdoms coincided with the process by which a small number of capital-based aristocrats with a tight grip on political power were overthrown by powerful regional warlords. The reunification of Korea and the reorganization of its ruling systems by the Koryŏ Dynasty was achieved through the approval of the engagement of these powerful regional warlords in the central political arena.

It was in the late 10th century that Koryŏ rulers began to send central government administrators to strategically important regional centers, but it was only in the late 14th century that they were able to send these same administrators to all the important towns in their kingdom. During this period, most of the regions were under the control of the regional warlords and their descendants.

These powerful political leaders were always interested in participating in the central government and joining the capital-based aristocracy by various means, including the civil examination system. Some regional warlords, on the other hand, chose to hold on to their traditional power base and maintain their influence over this base by using the political and economic resources they had already accumulated.

The royalty and aristocracy based in the capital city developed and maintained a refined culture, while the regional elites preserved a traditional cultural heritage of their own. Buddhism and Confucianism were two of the most powerful sources of Koryŏ's cultural and political development, although they blended harmoniously with various folk traditions and lifestyles.



The stone statue (18.12m in height) on the left is a granite Maitreya erected in the precincts of the Kwanch'oksa (Gwanoksa) Temple during the early Koryŏ Period. The delightfully simple indigenous artistic expression of the statue creates an impressive contrast with an Amitabha image (2.78m) from the Pusŏksa (Buseoksa) Temple that is marked by a well-balanced body and solemn face.

Agriculture and Religions of Koryŏ(Goryeo)

Koryŏ was basically an agricultural society that achieved steady progress in its use of farming techniques. The kingdom had almost no fallow farmland by the 12th century, but their accumulated knowledge helped farmers significantly increase their production by enabling them, for instance, to reap three harvests every two years. The promotion of farming was always an important duty of government officials, and the government's support, including the introduction of new farming skills and the construction of irrigation facilities, played an important role in improving farming efficiency and productivity.

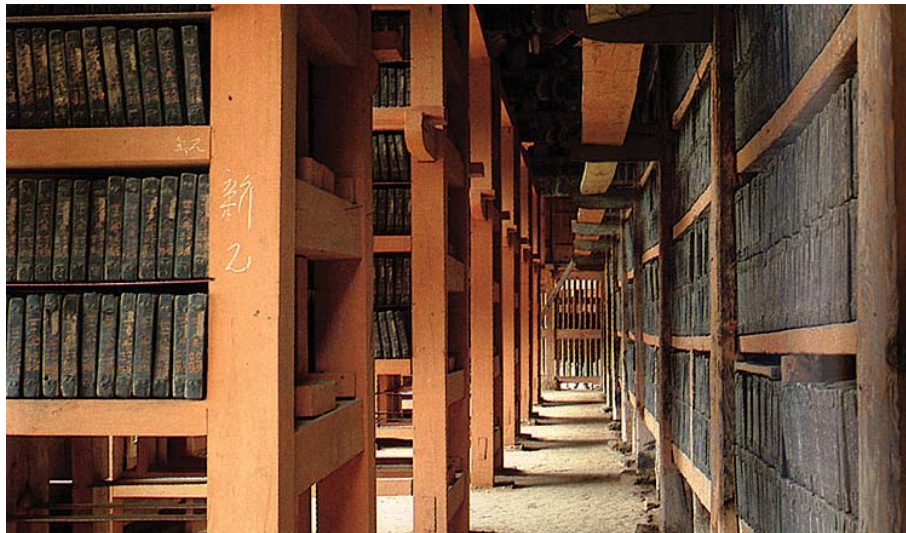
Meanwhile, natural disasters such as floods and droughts often had a catastrophic effect on not only farmers but the entire kingdom. Koryŏ rulers who used the Confucian rhetoric of "the mandate of heaven" to legitimize their power tried their best to prevent natural disasters which could threaten the base of their political legitimacy. Their final resort was usually to offer sacrificial rites to the presiding deity of rain. The rites were performed according to either the Confucian rules, which demanded discreet behavior on the part of the king, or as a Buddhist or Daoist service during which prayers for supernatural intervention were held.



The 2551st anniversary of Buddha's birthday
Records state that in 1352 the Lotus Lantern Festival was held on the 8th day of the 4th lunar month, which is known as Buddha's birthday. The Lotus Lantern Festival is still considered to be the largest and most celebrated Buddhist event of the year. The photo shown here captures a street scene in Seoul on the day of the 2007 festival.

Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism all exerted a great influence on the life of Koryŏ's people. The Confucian virtues of "loyalty" and "filial piety" were particularly important in the political world, while Buddhist and Daoist services were performed to honor deceased ancestors, expel evil forces or invoke good fortune.

Koryŏ's largest festival, the P'algwanhoe ("Festival of Eight Gates"), was held in the 11th (Kaegyŏng) and 10th (Sŏgyŏng) months of the lunar calendar. According to historical records, Koryŏ people used brightly lit lanterns to turn night into day during the festival, and prayed to the sacred deities residing in heaven and various parts of the natural world for good fortune. The government joined the celebration by granting amnesty to prisoners. Koryŏ celebrated P'algwanhoe festival until its demise in 1392, and it held such importance in the life of the state that it attracted even foreign merchants who visited Kaegyŏng (today's Kaesŏng) and Sŏgyŏng (today's P'yŏngyang) to watch the festival. The festival also coincided with large international markets. Another great festival was Yŏndŭnghoe ("Lotus Lantern Festival") held on the first day of the full moon (or, after 1010, the second day of the full moon) of the lunar year. On the festival day, the entire kingdom from the capital to the remotest local towns would light up their streets with lotus lanterns of all shapes and sizes, praying to the Buddha for the peace and happiness of the entire nation.



The Woodblock of Buddhist Tripitaka, stored in Haeinsa Temple
According to an old text of Koryŏ history, the annual P'algwanhoe Festival attracted a large number of merchants from foreign states, including the Chinese Song Dynasty and even Arabia. It was through the Arabian merchants who visited Koryŏ during this period that the name "Korea" first spread to the West.

Celadon Ware, a Clear Blue Sky after Rain



Celadon Ewer in the Shape of a Flying Dragon (left), Celadon Incense Burner with Lion-shaped Lid

Koryŏ's celadon vessels of the early period, known as sunch'ŏngja (suncheongja or "plain blue ceramics"), are characterized by a variety of shapes and a plain surface with no decoration.

It was some time around the 9th century that Silla developed pottery skills of its own. By the 11th century, Korean potters were making pottery of the world's finest quality. Locally known as ch'ŏngja (cheongja or "blue ceramics"), the celadon ware of Koryŏ fascinates admirers with its serene blue color, which reminds one of the blue of a clear sky after rain.

In the 12th century, Koryŏ potters developed the unique technique of inlaying various designs onto the surface of a celadon object. The technique of inlaying slips of different colors helped Koryŏ potters to create a wide variety of colorful designs.



Vase with crane pattern

This celadon ware is marked by a surface decorated with numerous cranes flying above clouds. The decoration was completed using Koryŏ's unique inlaying technique.





06

Establishment of the Consciousness of Historical Succession

Period 12th~14th century

Main Events Rebellion of Military Officials (1170), the Mongol Invasions (1231~73), Compilation of the Samguk Yusa (1281~1283)

World Foundation of the Mongol Empire by Genghis Khan (1206), Fall of the Southern Song (1279), Start of the Hundred Years' War (1337)

Silla and Paekche(Baekje) Restoration Movements

In 1202, a rebellion broke out in Kyōngju, the former capital of Silla, under the banner of Silla restoration. Thirty years later, another rebellion took place in part of the former Paekche territory. The goal of the rebellion was the restoration of Paekche. Both uprisings ended in failure, but the resultant concentration of power in the hands of a few powerful families continued to sow the seeds of internal discord in Koryŏ.

As Koryŏ grew, power came to be concentrated in the hands of a few meritorious subjects and strong regional warlords who succeeded in monopolizing high-ranking government positions from generation to generation. Civil officials, endowed with unbridled power, fell to vice and corruption, resulting in an uprising of politically estranged military officials, local leaders and peasants who were suffering from the corruption and exploitation of the ruling class. In 1170, a group of military officers launched a coup and established a military regime. It was also in this period of political unrest that peasant uprisings and rebellious movements for the restoration of Silla and Paekche followed one after another.



Stone Civil and Military Officials in King Kongmin's Tomb.
The tomb of King Kongmin exhibits the characteristic features of the royal tombs built in the Koryŏ period. Here, the stone statue of a civil official is placed in a higher position than that of a military official. As the political vision of Koryŏ was anchored in Confucian ideals, civil officials enjoyed superior status vis-a-vis military officials.

40-year War with the Mongols

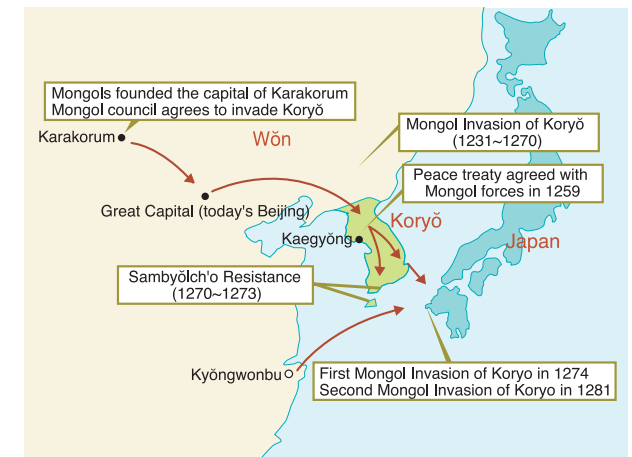
Despite the turmoil caused by the revolts of military leaders and a succession of regional uprisings, Koryŏ was able to maintain its integrity as a centralized state due to the long tradition of centralized government and the concentration of military forces in the capital.

In 1231, a massive Mongol army invaded Koryŏ, the first of six invasions that wrought devastation upon Koryŏ for over 40 years. The unyielding resistance of Koryŏ, however, resulted in a peace treaty whose terms allowed the kingdom to keep its royal lineage and sovereign power.

Nevertheless, the end of the war meant the fall of Koryŏ's military regime and the restoration of monarchical authority.

Koryŏ went through difficult times to meet the demands of the Mongols : it had to support the Mongols with troops and materials for its abortive invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281, shoulder the heavy burden of frequent tributary missions to the Yuan, and even change its rulers at the behest of the Yuan Court.

Mongol Invasions of East Asia
When the Mongols invaded Koryŏ, the military regime moved the capital to Kanghwado (Ganghwado) Island and continued to fight against the invaders. The lengthy period of resistance made the life of those still on the mainland unbearably painful, but it also forced the Mongols to concede that it would be impossible to establish direct control over Koryŏ.



Samguk Yusa, Chewang Un'gi (Jewang Ungi) and Chosŏn(Joseon)

While Koryŏ was experiencing a period of extraordinary peril and uncertainty during the Mongol Invasions and the rebellious movements to restore the older Korean kingdoms of Silla and Paekche, there emerged a tendency to look at Korean history from a new point of view.

A Koryŏ Buddhist monk named Iryŏn (Iryeon, 1206~1289), for instance, took a keen interest in the historical and cultural legacy left by the era preceding the Three Kingdoms Period. He wrote that the first Korean state, Chosŏn, was founded by Tan'gun. Another historian, a Confucian scholar named Yi Sŭnghyu (Yi Seunghyu, 1224~1300), researched the genealogy of Korea from Ko Chosŏn to Koryŏ in a work entitled Chewang Un'gi (or, A Verse of Emperors and Kings).

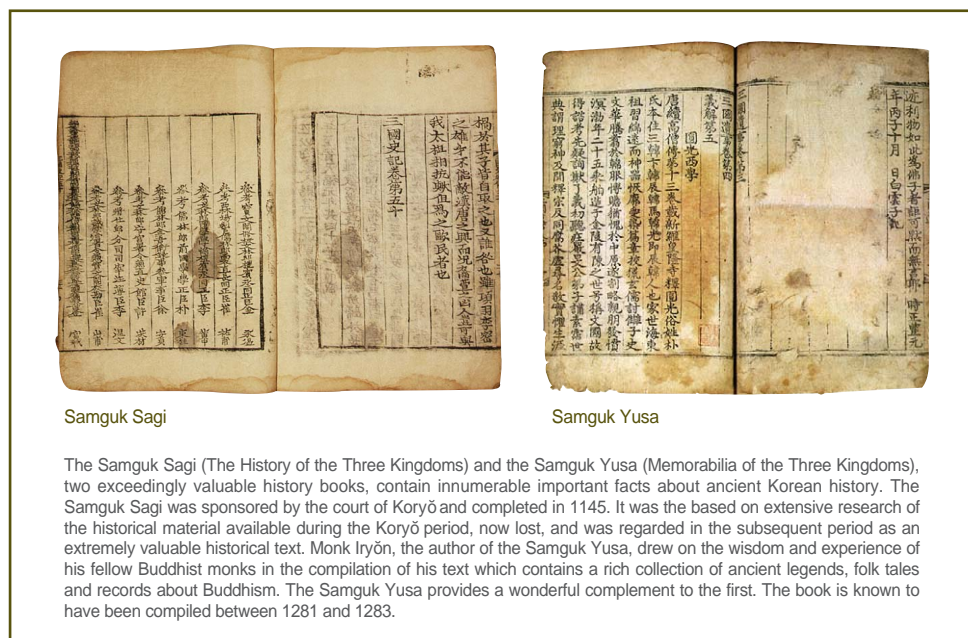
Ancient records show that the Chinese people referred to the states in the east as Samhan, or the "Three Han States". Now some Koryŏ scholars discovered that another Korean state named Chosŏn had existed before the Han (i.e. different from the Han Chinese) states, and that all the later Korean states shared a cultural and historical heritage that had originated from Chosŏn. Thus, it is surely no accident that another Korean kingdom named Chosŏn would ultimately arise on the ruins of Koryŏ.

Conflict between Confucianism and Buddhism

The Rebellion of Military Officials in the 12th century brought significant changes to the religion and philosophy of Koryŏ. The changed environment inflicted severe damage on Buddhism, which served as a spiritual bedrock for the members of Koryŏ's royalty and aristocracy. Furthermore, new religious communities and religious reform movements arose throughout the country.

The success of the coup by military leaders led to the expulsion of civil ministers from the government and the decline of the civil examination system. Now, Confucian scholars gave up the traditional goal of serving the dynasty and, instead, turned to an idyllic life in communion with nature.

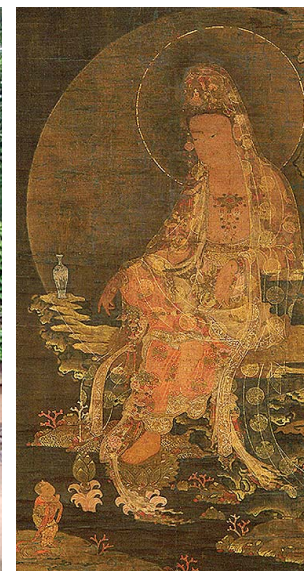
The end of the war against the Mongols brought another dramatic change to the kingdom's political life, as power fell into the hands of the aristocracy with the support of the Mongols. The Buddhist temples supported by these influential aristocrats recovered the political and economic influence that they had lost during the interregnum of the military seizure of power. Priests were given ample opportunities to engage in the political arena as high-ranking officials or even as royal tutors. Large Buddhist events were also held regularly.



Samguk Sagi

Samguk Yusa

The Samguk Sagi (The History of the Three Kingdoms) and the Samguk Yusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), two exceedingly valuable history books, contain innumerable important facts about ancient Korean history. The Samguk Sagi was sponsored by the court of Koryŏ and completed in 1145. It was based on extensive research of the historical material available during the Koryŏ period, now lost, and was regarded in the subsequent period as an extremely valuable historical text. Monk Iryŏn, the author of the Samguk Yusa, drew on the wisdom and experience of his fellow Buddhist monks in the compilation of his text which contains a rich collection of ancient legends, folk tales and records about Buddhism. The Samguk Yusa provides a wonderful complement to the first. The book is known to have been compiled between 1281 and 1283.



The stupa of Master Chinul (left)
The stupa of Master Chinul, (1158~1210), the most representative monk of the period of the military rule during Koryŏ. During this period monks and lay believers launched a community movement, combining physical labor and study and aimed at renovation of religious life. Subsequently this doctrine formed the foundation of the Chogyŏ Order.

Koryŏ Water Moon Avalokitesvara
In late Koryŏ many frescoes depicting aristocrats' craving for Buddhist paradise, were painted.

The Confucian scholars of Koryŏ, however, imported Neo-Confucian ideas from the Yuan Dynasty and accused contemporary Buddhism of being too mundane in character to uphold spiritual ideas and ideals. They criticized the temples and priests for compromising the original aim and functions of a religious community in their quest for wealth and political power. They asserted that Buddhism disturbed the social order by stressing the importance of individual spiritual growth, and praised Confucian ethics for its embodiment of the highest values.

These Neo-Confucian scholars established a paradigm of understanding the contemporary society correctly and clearly, and began to formulate full-scale reform programs in order to mold the society according to their pattern of thought. When their plans were finally materialized with the foundation of a new state at a later date, Buddhism was ultimately replaced by Confucianism, and the multi-religious social structure gave way to a monolithic structure, grounded solely in Confucian teachings.



Yi Chehyŏn (Yi Jehyeon), 1287~1367
Often dubbed "The Man of the World," Yi Chehyŏn (Yi Jehyeon) was a representative Neo-Confucian scholar of late Koryŏ who spent much of his life as a Confucian student in Yuan. He played a key role in the promotion and consolidation of Neo-Confucianism in Koryŏ. His portrait shown here was painted by an unknown Chinese artist.



cotton

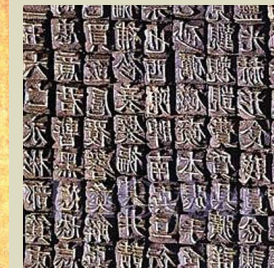
After the end of the war with the Mongols, the members of the Koryŏ elite were able to gain via exchange with the Mongol Empire more comprehensive knowledge about the cultural achievements of China and the outside world. It was also during this period that cotton was introduced to Koryŏ, leading to a revolutionary change in the clothing worn by Koryŏ people.

Koryŏ (Goryeo), Great Kingdom of Printing

Korean people in the days before the development of printing techniques made books simply by copying out the original by hand. As the demand for books increased, they sought after a better and faster method of producing books, resulting in the development of woodblock printing.

Archeological and historical evidence demonstrate that in Korea the technique of woodblock printing was first used during the Three Kingdoms Period. A woodblock print made in 8th century Silla has survived to the present day. In the Koryŏ period woodblock printing developed further still and was used extensively for the publication of books.

It was also in the Koryŏ period that a more advanced method of printing emerged. The method involved preparing movable type sets from which individual type pieces were chosen as required and set before printing. The historic invention of the world's first movable metal (bronze) types by Koryŏ artisans brought about a singularly dramatic development in the art of printing books.



Chikchi (Jikji) and metal type printing
Printed in Korea in 1377 and currently preserved at the National Library of France in Paris, this book on Korean Zen Buddhism is the oldest extant movable metal print book in the world. According to a Koryŏ record, the oldest movable metal type printing took place in Koryŏ in 1234.



07 Establishment of Chosŏn(Joseon) and the Invention of Han'gŭl(Hangeul)

Period 14th~15th century

Main Events Foundation of Chosŏn (1392), Invention of Han'gŭl (Hangeul) (1443), Promulgation of Kyŏngguk Taejŏn (Gyeongguk Daejeon) (1485)

World Foundation of Ming (1368), Fall of the Byzantine Empire (1453)

Chosŏn(Joseon) establishes itself in Seoul



Yi Seonggye

The reformist faction in the Koryŏ of the late 14th century consisted of two groups-well-educated Neo-Confucian civil officials (represented by Chŏng Tojŏn (Jeong Dojeon)) and military leaders of a reformist bent (represented by Yi Sŏnggye (Yi Seonggye)). These two distinct groups were none-the-less linked by a common element : they originated from local elites who had no connection with the powerful aristocrats based in the capital.

For Koryŏ, the 14th century was a period of great turmoil, owing to the repeated incursions of Japanese pirates along the coastal regions, the invasion of the Chinese Red Turban Bandits, and the wars with the formidable Mongol forces. The chaotic situation surrounding the dynasty made it very difficult, if not impossible, to introduce political and economic reforms.

In 1388, Yi Sŏnggye and Chŏng Tojŏn mobilized their army and assumed power. This successful coup was swiftly followed by the stabilization of the new regime's international relations, extensive reforms and, finally, the foundation of a new dynasty, Chosŏn, with Yi Sŏnggye as its first ruler (1392). It was with this launch of a new kingdom that Seoul was planned and built, according to the tenets of Confucian philosophy, and henceforth became the capital city of Korea.

Sungnyemun Gate

Designated Korea's National Treasure #1, this building was built as the southern gate of the fortified city of Seoul. As the gate's name, Sungnyemun ("Gate of Respecting Propriety"), suggests, it has overtones of one of the basic Confucian virtues. All other fortress gates in and around the capital have similar names, inspired by Confucian ethics.



New Borderlines along the Two Northern Rivers

To the founders of the new Korean dynasty, the name Chosŏn symbolized the first Korean state founded by Tan'gun, the father of all Korean people, and hence their pride in the long flow of history and civilization which had been achieved by the Korean people. The goal of the architects of the new dynasty, including Chŏng Tojŏn, was to create a Confucian state, steeped in Confucian values and virtues, and illustrating the precept "the king rules the people with virtue, people perform their duties according to their standing, and both rulers and subjects respect each other."

They regarded the newly established Ming Dynasty, founded by the Han Chinese, as the home of Confucian civilization. They, therefore, wished to maintain a friendly diplomatic relationship with the Ming according to the dictates of propriety. Their relationship with Japan, and the Jurchen on their northern border, on the other hand, was mostly confined to the issue of national defense. The strategy in connection with Japan was thus to open some southern ports to meet the Japanese demands for trade and stabilize the coastal areas. As regards the Jurchen, they built military facilities at various strategic points and had people migrate to strategically important areas in the north as a means of defense against any invasion by the Jurchen. The Chosŏn rulers regarded their state as highly civilized, comparable with China, but tended to view Japan and the northern tribes as less civilized.



Exploration of the Northern Territory

In the period between 1416 and 1449, Chosŏn's rulers established government offices and military facilities along the two northern rivers, Amnokkang (Yalu) and Tuman'gang (Dumangang or Tumen River), and encouraged people to migrate to the borderlands. They regarded the two rivers dividing Chosŏn and Jurchen as the borderline between the civilized world, where Confucian teaching prevailed, and the less civilized world. The two rivers were not just political but also cultural borders.

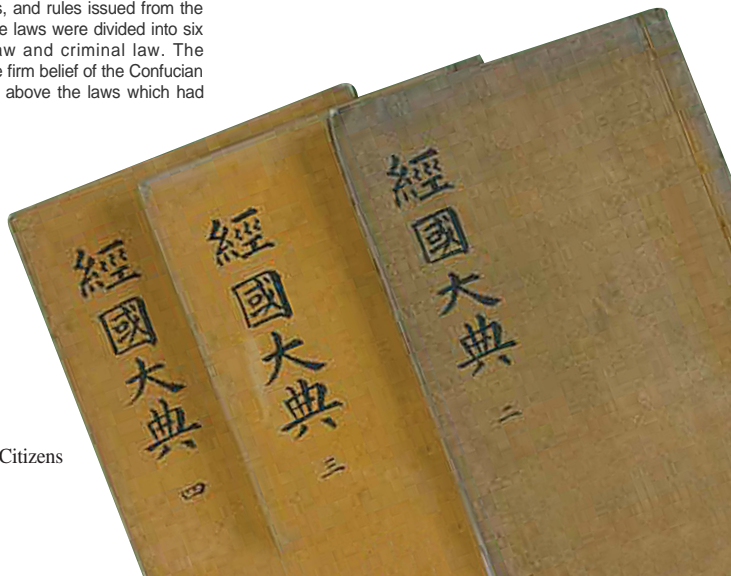
Establishment of an Ideal Confucian State

Chosŏn rulers spent the first few decades after the foundation of the dynasty establishing a system of governance that would last for half a millennium. The system, created after intensive study of both Korean and Chinese history, was based on the system of Koryŏ and combined with more Confucian ideals. Educational institutions in the capital and regional centers were either reorganized or improved, as was the civil service examination system, which was clearly intended as the sole legitimate channel of recruitment for high government official.

Chosŏn's unique hierarchical society, in which the wealthy Confucian literati joined the officialdom through the civil examination and played a leading role in politics, economy and culture, was a result of newly introduced political reforms. The Confucian elites who were also keen on the collection and analysis of a range of source materials on history, geography and culture, harnessed these source materials in a discussion about the necessity and direction of reform, made detailed records about the process and outcome of the new policy, and bequeathed them to the posterity. After decades of hard work, they compiled and published the Kyŏngguk Taejŏn ("Great Code for State Administration"), Chosŏn's national code.

The support for Confucian ideology went hand in hand with attack on Buddhism. Hostility of the Confucian scholar-statesmen of the Chosŏn dynasty was not limited to criticism of Buddhist doctrines : they persecuted Buddhism by defrocking and laicizing a large number of Buddhist priests. Buddhism still dominated the religiosity of many ordinary people, but it began to yield to Confucianism in the cultural domain.

Kyŏngguk Taejŏn ("Great Code for State Administration")
Completed in 1474, this book of Chosŏn's national code was made by compiling the laws, royal edicts and orders, and rules issued from the late Koryŏ to the early Chosŏn periods. The laws were divided into six categories, including administrative law and criminal law. The promulgation of this law code embodied the firm belief of the Confucian literati that even the serving king was not above the laws which had been promulgated by the preceding king.



King Sejong and Chosŏn(Joseon) in the 15th Century

The stable political structure of early Chosŏn contributed to the dynasty's social and economic stability. The life of the peasantry, which had reached its lowest ebb due to the ravages of war and exploitation by the ruling class in the earlier period, also became more or less stable, contributing to the improvement in productivity. Agriculture and the handicrafts achieved significant growth between the 14th and 15th centuries, and markets were regularly held, once every five to seven days, not only in the big cities such as Hanyang (today's Seoul) and Kaesŏng, but also in minor local cities.

The Confucian political ideology which held people to be "the root of a state" also helped yield positive results. The view that politics should be directed towards the welfare of the people led to the establishment of facilities for the relief of the poor, the publication and distribution of books on practical agricultural knowledge, and scientific and technical development.

The developments in the area of science and technology in the 15th century were particularly noteworthy. The invention of sophisticated equipment for astronomical observation combined with systematic research on observed phenomena culminated in the production of a calendar that compares well with that used today. There also appeared elaborate water clocks and sundials, while the emergence of rain gauges made it possible to keep records of precipitation. Developments in the areas of medicine and printing were equally remarkable. 15th century Chosŏn was widely regarded as the golden age of Korea's traditional science.



King Sejong The fourth monarch of the Chosŏn Dynasty, King Sejong, has long been held to be the most respected historical figure of the Korean people. Ruling his kingdom in accordance with the Confucian ideal that the people are the root of a state, King Sejong inaugurated an era of political stability. He is also noted for many great achievements, including the invention of the Korean writing system (Han'gŭl) which is by common consensus the greatest accomplishment of all. His portrait is printed on the 10,000-won currency bill, the highest currency of any note issued to date.

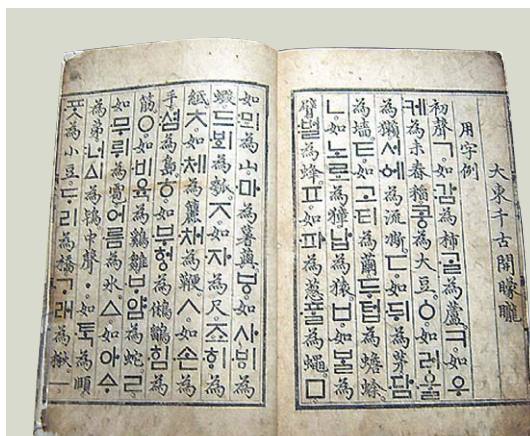
Han'gŭl(Hangeul) An Alphabet for the Korean People

“As the language of our nation does not fit easily with characters [i.e. Chinese characters], our people cannot communicate in a free manner. We considered this to be a woeful state of affairs and created 28 new letters, so all of you should be able to utilize them with ease and make your life more comfortable.”

Since the 15th century, the Korean people have used and benefited from a system of writing that was specifically designed to offer the most efficient means of reproducing the sounds of their language. The Chinese characters which Koreans had used up until the advent of Han'gŭl (“Korean Alphabet”) were useful only when conveying meaning. Han'gŭl, however, was and is a scientific writing system which enables the user to express almost any sound by combining the 28 letters.

When it first appeared, Han'gŭl was something akin to regaining sight for the multitudes of commoners and women who could not afford the huge amount of time required to learn thousands of Chinese characters. It also represented a turning point in the development of Korean literature, as people were now able to write down the beautiful sounds of the Korean language as they were truly spoken.

Hunmin Chŏng'ŭm (Hunmin Jeongeum or “The Proper Sounds for the Education of the People”)-this, the original name of Han'gŭl, reveals that the invention of the writing system was directly connected with a Confucian ideology that emphasized the importance of people, and as such was a product born of the spirit of the age.



Hunmin Chŏng'ŭm Haerye (Hunmin Jeongeum Haerye or “Explanations and Examples of Hunmin Chŏng'ŭm”)

One may relate the invention of Han'gŭl with the tradition in many East Asian countries of expressing the sounds of their language by using Chinese characters. What makes Han'gŭl different from other writing systems is that it went one step further and created a system that was fundamentally different from the other systems, as well as the Chinese characters, in terms of its principles and uses.

Standing Proud Before History ...

The Korean ruling class began to keep historical records known as sillok (sillok or “veritable records”) from the time the Koryŏ Dynasty was founded in the 10th century. These chronological records, written on a daily basis, concerned the events that took place during the reign of a particular monarch. Unfortunately, no Koryŏ records have survived to the present day.

The system for keeping these records became much more systematic during the Chosŏn period. Chosŏn's rulers established a government organization that was exclusively responsible for producing the historical records, and hired qualified chroniclers who were entrusted with the task of accompanying the kings to almost every event and preparing records of their words and deeds. Any documents sent to or from the king inevitably had to pass through the chronicler's hands.

The records were then compiled into a book after the death of the king concerned. As a means of ensuring the objectivity of the records, the dynasty allowed the chroniclers total independence. Even the kings were not allowed to read them-not even after the records had been compiled into books-an eloquent testament to the integrity of the institution.

The tradition was established in the belief that politics is the realization of the will of heaven, and that the king should accordingly revere the judgment of history.



Chosŏn Wangjo Sillok

The Chosŏn Dynasty left behind a vast collection of chronological records covering the entire span of all but the last two Chosŏn rulers (25 monarchs in 472 years), which are now collected under the title, Chosŏn Wangjo Sillok (Joseon Wangjo Sillok or “The Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty”). The collection, containing 64 million Chinese characters and dealing with a broad spectrum of issues running from politics and the economy to social and cultural affairs, has been designated by UNESCO as a Memory of the World.



08 Spread of Confucian Culture

Period 15th~17th century

Main Events Japanese Invasion of 1592 (~1598), Second Manchurian Invasion of 1636

World Magellan's Voyage around the World (1519~1522), Unification of China by Qing (1644), Glorious Revolution in Great Britain (1688)

Life under the Confucian Ideology

The Confucian scholars who had led the social reform towards the end of the Koryŏ period ultimately split into two groups and went their separate ways. The first group argued for the founding of a new dynasty through revolution on the understanding that the Koryŏ Dynasty had succumbed to its own turmoil and was no longer able to follow the correct path. They took the initiative in founding the new dynasty, paving the way for the birth of a new Confucian state.

The members of the other group held that a true Confucian gentleman served only one king and they returned to their homes after opposing the overthrow of Koryŏ through revolutionary movement. There they studied the Confucian scriptures, educated the young, and explored the idea of ideal politics, as well as their own culture.

Within a few decades of the founding of the new dynasty, the followers of the second group decided to join the political life of the country. Consequently, the followers of the first group, who had already grown to be the major force in the central government, and the followers of the second group, who had distinguished themselves in the arena of academic and philosophical inquiry, were polarized, confronting each other over almost every issue regarding the future direction and policies of the dynasty.

Sosu Sŏwŏn

Sŏwŏn, a private Confucian institution consisting of an academy and a shrine, is both a symbol and a representation of the Confucian culture of the Chosŏn period. Confucian scholars founded the Sŏwŏn by establishing a shrine in honor of the renowned scholars of the past and an academy to educate the young. The Sŏwŏn became the focal point for the academic community of the nearby areas. The photograph shows the first Sŏwŏn in history, the Sosu Sŏwŏn in Yŏngju (Yeongju), Kyŏngsangbuk do (Gyeongsangbuk do).



Establishment of a Confucian Political Culture



Yi Hwang (1501~1570) and Yi I (1536~1584)

These two great scholars established the framework of Neo-Confucianism in Korea by thoroughly studying the different Confucian scriptures based on the traditions of Chosŏn in the late 16th century. They placed great emphasis on the importance of the king's devotion to the study of the Confucian scriptures, and wrote books to help him understand Confucian learning or the word of the past sages. They also exerted considerable effort in disseminating Confucian ethics among the general population. The photograph shows their portrait as it appears on Korean currency bills.

The group of Neo-Confucian literati which had emerged on the political stage of Chosŏn quite late raised their voice in favor of "Virtuous Politics-politics based on the Confucian philosophy," and attacked the meritorious elites in high-ranking positions who had taken their long-held privileges for granted. On the strength of the "words of the sages," which they took from the Confucian scriptures, they called for ethical politics, based on a voluntary curtailment of power by the ruler and the meritorious elites which dominated officialdom.

Neither the king nor the meritorious elites could openly and legitimately confront these arguments. Nevertheless,

confrontation was inevitable because the latter challenged the authority of the king as well as the power of the meritorious elites by stirring up a nationwide consensus against them.

Both the king and the meritorious elites carried out four major "literati purges" against the Neo-Confucian literati in government in which countless people were killed, forced into exile, or stripped of their titles. However, the ideals promoted by the Neo-Confucian literati had gained widespread support, and they soon became reality by the late 16th century.

The supreme virtue of the ruler was to study the "words of the sages," and debates about different policies became the norm. Furthermore, the notion that government officials should reflect public opinion in their formulation of policies became an essential element of the political process. Government officials and scholars with similar academic backgrounds and stances formed factions. Different factions with mutually divergent ideological perspectives and political affiliations competed with one another.

Japanese Invasion of 1592, the Second Manchurian Invasion of 1636 and the Confucian Reforms



Yi Sunsin
The Japanese Invasion of 1592 (Kor. Imjin Waeran) was a large-scale international war that involved Chosŏn, Ming China and Japan. In the beginning, Japan, already in active exchanges with the West, dominated the campaign by using muskets imported from Portugal. However, the artillery technology and waterway strategies of Chosŏn and Ming facilitated the resurrection of the allied forces. The photograph shows a portrait of Yi Sunsin (1545–1598), who commanded Chosŏn's navy during the war. He had predicted the war and had made thorough preparations for it. He achieved victory in all the battles he fought but was killed in the last battle.

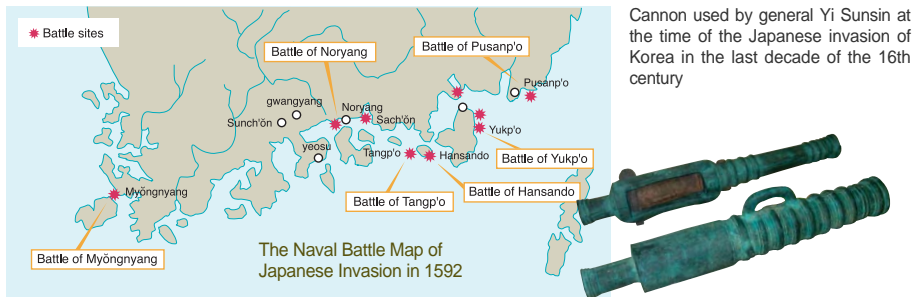
The Chosŏn Dynasty was faced with the most formidable challenge in its history for many decades following the Japanese Invasion of 1592.

In 1592, Japan attacked Chosŏn with a large army of 150,000 men. Chosŏn had not experienced a major war for some 200 years at that time, and most of its territory was quickly occupied by well-trained Japanese soldiers, equipped with the latest weapon, the musket, during the initial stage of the invasion.

Chosŏn's victory at sea under the command of Yi Sunsin, however, created the necessary breathing space for a reversal of fortune. Chosŏn's navy, with its advanced cannon technology and waterway strategies, took firm control of the sea. Furthermore, civilian militias called a "righteous army" (uibyeong / uibyeong) were formed nationwide and the government-led army was reorganized, which led to a dramatic change in the situation.

Reinforcements dispatched by Ming China also contributed to the favorable outcome of the war. The ultimate objective of the Japanese campaign was the invasion of Ming and as such it was in Ming's best interests to support Chosŏn. Ming took command of Chosŏn's military and repeatedly engaged in negotiations and battles with Japan.

The six-year-war finally came to an end in 1598. After the allied forces of Chosŏn and Ming China defeated the Japanese army and the latter's demand for negotiation was repeatedly turned down, the surviving Japanese troops withdrew from the peninsula.



In less than 40 years after Chosŏn's successful defense against the Japanese invasion, it had to face another disastrous war. The country was invaded by the Manchurian force from the north who had long been considered barbarians by both Chosŏn and the Ming. The Second Manchurian Invasion of 1636 (Kor. Pyŏngja Horan / Byeongja Horan) ended in Chosŏn's defeat. Subsequently, Manchus founded Qing, a new Chinese dynasty.

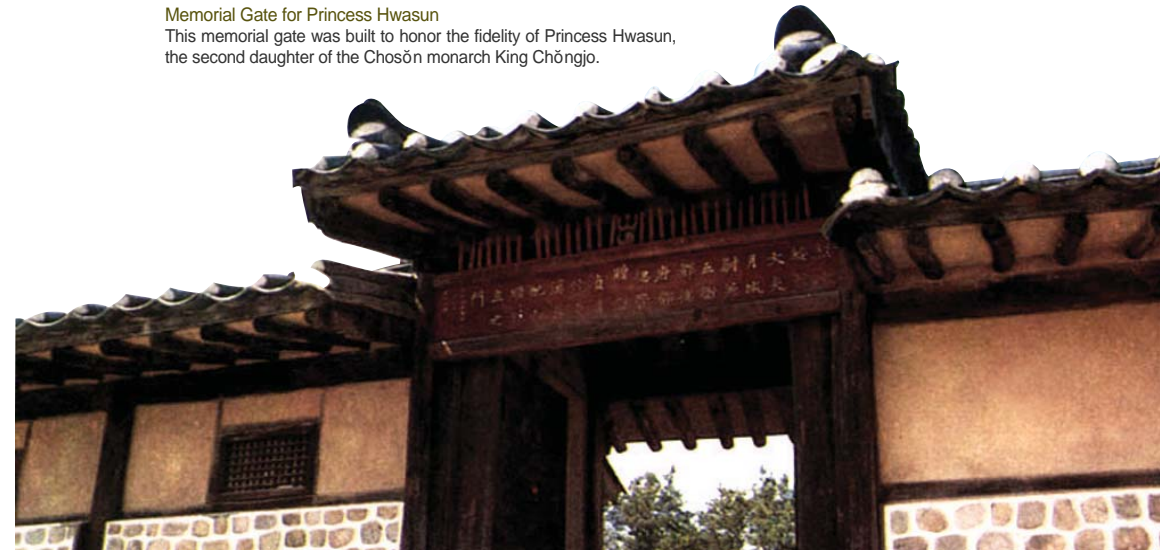
Popular support for the Chosŏn Dynasty considerably declined during the course of the two wars. Various documents concerning the nation's demographics and taxation were destroyed, and the class and land ownership systems were threatened; the basis for the government's authority was immeasurably weakened.

The king and his ministers tried to overcome these difficulties through a process of Confucian Reform-which meant the Confucianization of Korean society. They argued that, with the fall of the Ming dynasty, Chosŏn became the civilized 'core' of Confucian values, and that it was incumbent upon Chosŏn to wreak vengeance on the Qing for overthrowing the Ming dynasty, the center of civilization. At the heart of the reform lay an effort to change the lifestyle and customs of the entire Korean society, from the ruler on the top of the social pyramid to the common people below, to fit Confucian norms.

The aristocrats and gentry who held authority over local communities enthusiastically responded to the reforms. Financially robust members of the merchant class also displayed keenness in their reception of the Confucian culture which essentially represented the culture of an aristocratic society.

Nevertheless, the reforms could not offer a practical solution to the deteriorating quality of life which the masses faced. As a result, efforts were made to explore alternative ways to solve the problem. For instance, armed rebellious organizations sprang up in different parts of the country, attacking the dynastic system.

Memorial Gate for Princess Hwasun
This memorial gate was built to honor the fidelity of Princess Hwasun, the second daughter of the Chosŏn monarch King Chŏngjo.



An Aristocratic Culture Based on Confucian Values



Painting of Plum flowers by Yi Maech'ang
(1573~1610)

With the introduction of the Confucian Reform, the philosophical study of human nature and efforts to establish and consolidate Confucian ethical standards at both the national and individual level began to flourish. The diligent cultivation of their ethics and virtues became as important as success in their career as scholar-officials for aristocratic Confucian scholars. For some of them, their focus in life shifted to education and academic accomplishments as well.

Literature, calligraphy, and painting were considered the ideal means for cultivating one's mind and expressing one's thoughts. Men from noble families studied history and literature alongside the Confucian scriptures, and wrote poetry in their free time. Calligraphy, which is an intensely artistic display of writing, became established as a domain of

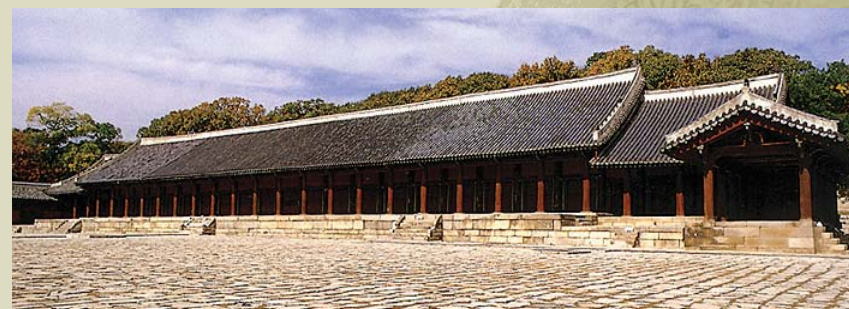
the arts as well. Both men and women from noble families often painted plum blossoms, orchids, bamboo, and other plants which were viewed as symbols of Confucian values. They also drew paintings accompanied by calligraphic flourishes that captured the Confucian ideal.

Architecture also mirrored the plain and frugal characteristics of the times. Rather than building large and extravagant buildings, and tending gardens with artificial features, small pavilions were built amid beautiful scenery, good light, and a cool breeze so people could enjoy a life that was in harmony with nature.

Farmers also developed a community culture based on the tradition of communal sharing practices. The increasing use of Hangŭl (Hangeul), the Korean alphabet, by the public also led to the birth of the first truly Korean literary works. Nevertheless, most cultural activities revolved around a small number of aristocrats who were steeped in Confucian values.

Life and Culture • 7

Ancestral Memorial Rites



Chongmyo The photograph shows an overview of Chongmyo in Seoul. It was originally built in 1394, but was rebuilt in 1608 after being burnt during the Japanese invasion of 1592.

Piety for one's parents held much greater value than loyalty to the king during the Chosŏn period. It was also believed that the king should serve as an archetypal exemplar of Confucian values and virtues by treating his own parents and ancestors with the utmost respect so as to inspire and encourage piety and loyalty amongst his subjects.

When Seoul was chosen as the new capital city, a shrine to the king's ancestors was built at the same time as the royal palace itself. The shrine was built to the east of the palace for the royal ancestors; the Chongmyo (Jongmyo) shrine subsequently became the most sacred and spiritual place in all Chosŏn.

The equivalent of the Chongmyo shrine for a Confucian family was the Kamyŏ (Gamyŏ, or family shrine). Ancestral tablets for the three previous generations were housed in a family's Kamyŏ, and family members gathered in front of it for a ceremonial rite to inform their ancestors of all major events.

This rite was not the kind of ceremony intended to invoke good fortune by worshiping one's ancestors as deities; it was more a reminder that one should live an honorable life before one's ancestors as well as pledge to serve one's parents with utmost filial piety in conformity with the Confucian moral precepts.



09 Rise of Sirhak(Silhak) and the Call for Egalitarianism

Period 17th~19th Century

Main Events Dispatch of T'ongsinsa or Chosŏn Envoys (1607), Completion of the Hwasŏng (Hwaseong) Fortress (1796)

World First circumnavigation of the globe by Magellan's expedition (1522), Unification of Japan (1590), Fall of Ming, and Qing's Unification of China (1636), French Revolution (1789)

Envoys' Visit to Japan and Qing China

Ten years after the end of the Japanese invasion of 1592, Chosŏn finally accepted Japan's request for a diplomatic relationship. Chosŏn dispatched an envoy for repatriating its prisoners of war, and opened the Pusan (Busan) port to the entry and residence of Japanese merchants, facilitating in the process the trade relationship between the two countries. Every time there was a change in the Japanese leadership, a T'ongsinsa (Korean Envoys to Japan) was sent to Japan upon the latter's request.

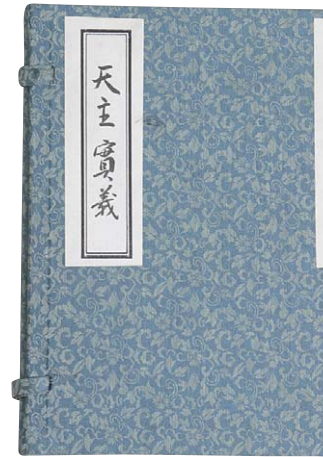
An even more brisk and vibrant commercial and diplomatic interaction took place between Chosŏn and Qing. Envoys were dispatched between the two countries several times each year. Powerful merchants invariably joined the embassies from both Chosŏn and Qing, establishing thereby the basis for a large-scale commercial relationship. Small-time merchants also engaged in unofficial trade across the border between Chosŏn and Qing.

Chosŏn's international relationship was apparently limited to its two neighbors, China and Japan. First of all, it was an agricultural country without any pressing need for international trade. Secondly, Chosŏn considered itself the center of Confucian civilization, and thus looked down on Qing, while remaining alert to the possibility of another invasion by Japan.



Chosŏn T'ongsinsa Procession
A total of twelve Chosŏn Envoys (T'ongsinsa) were sent from Chosŏn to Japan between 1607 and 1811. Approximately 300~500 persons participated in each of these large diplomatic missions which served as a major conduit for articulating cultural exchange between the two countries.

Rise of a New Ideological Movement



Ch'ŏnju sirui (True Principles of Catholicism)
Western books and commodities entered Korea through China and brought by visiting Korean envoys. Koreans were especially interested in the art of making calendar and casting cannons. Many Koreans were fascinated with such Western gadgets as mechanical watch or alarm clock which was unknown in Korea at the time.

Neo-Confucianism was established in China in the 13th century against the background of a division of Chinese society into two classes-landowners and sharecroppers-and the political instability caused by the incursion of nomadic tribes from the North. The Chosŏn dynasty was confronted in the 17th century with a similar situation. It experienced the chaos and devastation of two major wars. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the program of Confucian Reform during this period was shaped predominantly by Neo-Confucian principles.

It was in this period that some Confucian literati in Chosŏn began to seek a comprehensive knowledge of the world from a new, realist point of view. They closely observed the rapidly changing economy and social conditions, and concluded that it was facile to understand the world as a binary construction of "civilized" versus "barbarian".

Productivity in agriculture and handicrafts increased sharply after the 17th century. Trade grew both in volume and value, and the commodity and monetary transactions began to penetrate even into rural areas. Rich farmers bought up land to expand their influence and, in turn, a large number of poor farmers lost their landholding, resulting in great economic disparity throughout the country.

Chosŏn not only encountered the ceaselessly changing society of the Qing, once considered barbarian, but also another world: the brave, new world of the West. While Confucianism continued to inform the worldview of the literati, some scholars questioned the established paradigm of knowledge. They adopted a different approach for the understanding of the contemporary world and the various problems it faced. This represented a new school of thought, and came to be known as Sirhak (Silhak or "Practical Learning"), because it was primarily dedicated to a practical approach to statecraft.

Two Different Approaches Pak Chega (Pak Jega) and Chŏng Yakyong (Jeong Yakyong)



Chŏng Yakyong (1762~1836)

One of the most widely-known and respected realist scholars, he argued that the development of rural areas should be promoted through land reform and the import of new technology. His famous statement, "The ruler is selected by the people," echoes Jean Jacques Rousseau's theory of a social contract.

Sirhak scholars emphasized the significance of understanding the contemporary reality in a systematic manner and of exploring new ways and means to bring about social and political changes. Some suggested that Chosŏn follow the example set by Qing, which had achieved astonishing economic growth from being a mere barbaric tribal state, and import advanced technologies to promote the development of commerce and industry. Others raised concern about the growing economic disparity, derived from the spread of merchandise and the monetary economy, and called for the reorganization of land ownership and the enhancement of productivity.

King Chŏngjo (Jeongjo), the last king of Chosŏn in the 18th century, introduced a major reform policy with the help of a Sirhak scholar named Chŏng Yakyong. The construction of the Hwasŏng Fortress was highly representative of King Chŏngjo's determination ; as the largest national project of the 18th century, it included a

plan to build a new city to the south of Seoul and foster its growth as an international center of commerce as well as to establish a government-run farm to boost agricultural productivity. He also implemented certain unconventional policies that allowed people to overcome the limitations imposed upon them by the class system, and attempted to abolish the institution of slavery.

Hwasŏng Fortress

Hwasŏng Fortress, completed in September 1796, extends for a total length of 5,744m. A considerable part of the fortress wall collapsed during the Japanese colonial rule and the Korean War, only to be restored in the 1970s. The entire process of construction was recorded in detail in a book entitled The Archive Record of the Construction of the Hwasŏng Fortress (Hwasŏng Sŏng'yŏk ŭigwe). Its beauty widely renowned, the structure was registered as a World Cultural Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1997.



One Civilization Pitted against Another

When King Chŏngjo passed away in the first year of the 19th century, Chŏng Yakyong was dismissed from office, since the majority of the ruling class viewed him as a threat because of his strong advocacy of land reform and the abolition of slavery.

The ruling elite of the state launched a strident attack on Chŏng, arguing that his crime was not that of political dissidence but of following Catholicism. It is evident that in accusing Chŏng of being a catholic convert, people in power sought to manipulate the social consensus against Catholicism whose denunciation of ancestral rites and hierarchical social structure challenged the ideological foundation of the dynasty.

The Chosŏn dynasty was marked in the early 19th century by ideological movements that used various channels, including Western-oriented knowledge and Catholicism, to bring about required changes. The officials of the Chosŏn dynasty considered Catholicism and political subversion as indistinguishable, and upheld Confucian culture as the sole reservoir of wisdom and the only redeemer of civilization.

In the 19th century, the Chosŏn dynasty considered Western civilization, which appeared to have little resemblance to Confucian values, as barbaric. The Western countries, bent on forcing open the sealed Asian door to trade and diplomacy, also perceived Chosŏn's isolationist policy as a reflection of its barbarism. A clash between the two civilizations seemed inevitable.

Chŏltusan (Jeoldusan) Martyrs' Shrine (Seoul)

The history of the development of Catholicism in Chosŏn is indeed unique in that scholars in search of a new vision for their society studied the Catholic doctrine, embraced it of their own volition, and built their own churches. The photograph shows the most famous Catholic shrine where a large collection of materials relating to Catholicism's struggle in Korea is exhibited.



A Voice for Equality

Even among the Sirhak scholars there existed a number of different groups, each pursuing different ideals. It was certain that the world could not be united under either Confucian culture or Western religion. Towards the late Chosŏn period, when Korea was undergoing rapid socio-economic changes, there emerged many different ways and viewpoints to interpret and portray the world.

A new cultural stream, distinct from the aristocratic culture of the 17th~19th century, which had been characterized by its poetry and paintings of the four symbols of the Confucian value system, appeared during this period. Literature written in Korean became increasingly popular, and people started to paint scenes of everyday life. P'ansori (Pansori), or the operatic performance based on popular Korean novels, and T'alch'um (Talchum), a mask dance theater focusing on the absurdity of human nature and society, were widely cherished as popular forms of entertainment.

The essence of the new ideologies was captured in this artistic development. Many works of literature denounced the absurdity and irrationality of the class system and the patriarchal social structure, as well as the injustice and exploitation of corrupt government officials. Subjective sensibility, which had been suppressed by the Confucian norm of controlled silence, was voiced through different musical performances.

During this period revolutionary ideas also began to spread among the people. Organized bands of slaves called for the massacre of slave-owners, arguing that only by killing their masters could they create a new world. Farmers frequently organized town-based resistance movements against the abuse of government officials. Millenarian beliefs in the collapse of the Chosŏn Dynasty and the rise of a new dynasty on its or the advent of Maitreya, the Future Buddha to transform the world, grew strong among the common people.

The period from the 17th to the 19th centuries represented the most turbulent era, marked by popular rebellions as well as religious, ideological, and cultural movements that strived to end widespread oppression and injustice and create a just society.



T'alch'um

T'alch'um, literally "mask dance," is a traditional theatrical performance in which multiple players wearing masks and matching costumes perform a loosely fixed scenario through dance, dialogue and song. The performance normally took place in the courtyard of a large house or in a marketplace where the audience sat to form a large circle and where performers used the empty space in the middle as their stage.

Sin Yunbok Capturing the Private Life of Chosŏn(Joseon) Women

Sin Yunbok (1758~?) came from a family of professional artists. Both his father and grandfather were court painters who worked for a government agency called the Office of Charts and Paintings (Tohwasŏ / Dohwaseo) which was responsible for creating paintings which related to royal or national events. It is not known whether he, too, held a position at the Tohwasŏ, but it is clear he did not wish to sketch according to convention.

He was talented at painting landscapes, birds, and animals that were popular among the aristocratic aesthetes of his time ; still, this did not satisfy his thirst for something new.

Sin placed women at the center of his works. Women had never appeared in paintings in any form before, but now, they suddenly held an allure or charm which was largely a product of their versatility. Sin focused on portraying the natural beauty of women while making love as the major theme of his works.

The 17th~19th century was a time when women began to be recognized as independent beings and when new emotions could be made visible. The works of Sin served as a conduit through which this change was articulated and expressed with great sensitivity, as he, too, sought a world free of conventional restrictions.



Genre painting





10 Aggressive Attitude of Foreign Powers and Reform Movements

Period 1860~1894

Main Events Opening of Korean Ports (1876), Kapsin (Gapsin) Coup (1884), Tonghak Peasant Movement (1894)

World Opium War and China's Economic and Cultural Opening (1842), Meiji Restoration in Japan (1868), German Unification (1871), Sino-Japanese War (1894)

Chosŏn(Joseon) in the Transition Period



Prince Hŭngsŏn (Heungseon)

Prince Hŭngsŏn was the father of King Kojong (Gojong), who was enthroned in 1863 as the 26th king of Chosŏn. The king's father was not born a prince but was conferred this title due to the adoption of his son into the royal family and his ascent to the throne of Chosŏn. As a regent of the young ruler, he became the de facto ruler of the state and exercised monarchical power for about a decade, apparently because filial piety was the highest virtue under the Chosŏn dynasty.

Seoul was awash with rumors in 1860. Merchants and envoys brought news that Qing, which was then considered the world's greatest nation, had been struck by a barbarian invasion, forcing the emperor to take refuge far from the capital (the 2nd Opium War, 1858~1860). According to the rumors, these barbarians might attack Chosŏn to bring a halt to the government's suppression of Catholics.

Even though the rumors were nothing more than rumors, the authorities could not help but feel threatened. Then, just two years later, in 1862, a more shocking incident actually transpired. The peasant uprising that had begun in Chinju (Jinju), spread across the nation. People refused to pay their taxes, attacked government offices, and killed or drove away corrupt officials.

Externally, the threat of foreign invasion grew, while internally, a rebel movement which called for broad social change began to gain momentum; the Chosŏn Dynasty faced a transition period in 1860.

Kyŏngbŏkkung (Gyeongbokgung) Palace

The photograph (right) shows the first palace of Chosŏn, Kyŏngbŏkkung, which was burned down in 1592 and restored under the direction of Prince Hŭngsŏn.



Prince Hŭngsŏn Taewŏngun (Heungseon Daewongun) Stands Firm against the Foreign Powers

In 1863, a time of escalating threat from both within and outside the country, King Kojong was crowned at the age of 12. Prince Hŭngsŏn, the king's father, succeeded in concentrating monarchical power in his hands because of the sense of crisis gripping the minds of the Korean people.

Prince Hŭngsŏn believed that he had to eliminate internal enemies and unite society in order to fight the foreign powers. He ordered the execution of thousands of Catholics in order to abort potential acts of subversion. He also instituted tax reforms in a bid to prevent oppression and exploitation of peasants by venal officials and aristocrats, the major cause of peasant uprisings in Chosŏn. He viewed the monarch as the axial force of a centralized polity, and his sweeping political reforms were intended to realize his vision for the monarchical institution. His program of restoration of the Kyŏngbok Palace at massive expense to the state was intended to project and promote royal authority.

Two brief wars broke out against France and the US in 1866 and 1871, respectively. France and the US demanded that Chosŏn open its doors and engage in cultural and commercial relations with the outside world, but Prince Hŭngsŏn rejected this outright under the assumption that negotiation with foreign powers was tantamount to a betrayal of the national interest. In the wake of the Meiji restoration in 1868, when Japan demanded the opening of Korea to cultural and commercial relations, the Prince refused. He believed that foreign powers would seek to undermine Chosŏn's autonomy in the name of diplomatic relations.



Kwangsŏngjin (Gwangseongjin) Garrison Site

The photograph shows the Kwangsŏngjin Garrison Site on Kanghwa Island. It was a gateway to Seoul for ships traveling from the South, and as such bore great military significance. At the time of the US Invasion, a major battle broke out at this site.

Cultural and Economic Opening, Modernization and Tongdosŏgi (Dongdoseogi)



Pyŏlgigun (Byeolgigun, or Special Skill Force)

Chosŏn's policy of opening and reform placed great emphasis on the maintenance of the autonomy of the country which it sought to achieve by strengthening its military forces, implementing a balanced diplomatic strategy and introducing advanced technologies. The photograph shows the modernized army, which was representative of the government's policy stand. It formed part of a plan to train military officers in modern skills with help from Japan.

Chosŏn signed a “modernization treaty” to serve as the basis of a diplomatic relationship with Japan in 1876 (the Treaty of Kanghwa). This took place just three years after King Kojong assumed power, forcing his father to retire.

There had always been opposition to Prince Hŭngsŏn's determination to keep foreign powers out of the country. His opponents perceived diplomatic relations with the West as inevitable, and argued that new technologies and cultures should be introduced in a controlled setting. However, in the face of a direct military threat from Japan, the

treaty of 1876 was forced upon Chosŏn which resulted in Korea's loss of status in the international society. The treaty in itself contained many articles that were unfavorable to Chosŏn.

The Chosŏn government decided to expand and diversify its policy of cultural and commercial opening four years after signing the Kanghwa Treaty with Japan. It sent envoys and students to Japan and Qing China to acquire first-hand experience of the changes taking place in the two societies and learn about new technologies. These efforts were then extended to Western countries, starting with the formation of a diplomatic relationship with the US, in 1882.

The decision to expand Chosŏn's cultural and commercial opening aroused heated debate. Many people still believed that such a decision would not divert the foreign powers' dark intention to invade Chosŏn and that the inflow of new culture would impair and undermine the values fostered by the nation throughout its history.



Kim Okkyun (Kim Okgyun, 1851~1894)
Kim Okkyun led the Kapsin Coup in 1884. He believed that the independence of Chosŏn would be considerably compromised if the country did not introduce radical changes. He argued that the first step towards making such changes was to break free of Qing's influence.

The advocates of the opening of Chosŏn are known as the Enlightenment Faction, which was divided into two broad trends. Some members of the Enlightenment Faction argued that Chosŏn was a civilized country with a long tradition and that new science and technology from foreign countries should be introduced without giving up the nation's traditional values and institutions (Tongdosŏgi Eastern Way, Western Technology). Others called for the overall westernization of society based on the notion that the advanced science and technology of the West were directly related with spiritual values and political systems (Civilization and Enlightenment).

In 1882, military officials demanded the discontinuation of the policy of cultural and commercial opening by exposing the problems caused and the corruption practiced by the government officials in charge of implementing that policy (the Imo Military Rebellion). However, when the supporters of ‘Civilization and Enlightenment’ staged the Kapsin Coup and seized power in 1884, they put forward a comprehensive agenda of reforms for the

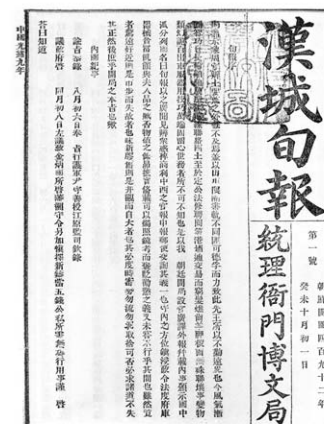
political and economic systems of the country.

The coup proved abortive and the agenda of reform also failed to be implemented. Qing dispatched a large military force on the pretext of protecting the royal family of Chosŏn. Qing's military force and government officials stayed on in Chosŏn after the situation had been normalized and used their power to interfere in Chosŏn government affairs, significantly undermining the latter's autonomy.

The policy of cultural and commercial opening continued even after the radicals who had called for ‘Civilization and Enlightenment’ stepped down. Efforts to integrate different institutional protocols and adopt foreign technologies and knowledge for the development of education, the military and industry continued, and foreign cultures and goods made their way into Chosŏn through cultural and economic exchange.

Hansŏng Sunbo (Hanseong Sunbo or Seoul Tri-monthly)

The photograph shows a copy of Hansŏng Sunbo, which was launched in 1883. The first newspaper to be published in Korea, it was printed every 10 days and distributed mainly to government offices. Its editorials columns emphasized the fact that there existed other independent civilizations outside the Confucian bubble, which was centered on China, and emphasized the need to determine the right course of action for Chosŏn.



Peasants' Dream of Egalitarian Society

As the cultural and commercial opening reached full swing, the lives of peasants became increasingly difficult. The export of rice from Chosŏn raised food prices, and the import of cotton products shattered the foundation of the country's rural industries.

While the foreign countries' influence grew over time, the government's response did not provide the people with any sense of security. Furthermore, the unjust exploitation of certain government officers intensified under the pretext of the fiscal deficit.

Meanwhile, Tonghak, a new religion that promised to lead the suffering masses to a new world, spread quickly among peasants. The faceless masses and intellectuals hungry for radical change came together under the banner of Tonghak, and launched a large-scale peasant movement to overthrow the unjust regime (the Tonghak Peasant Movement).

The uprising was led by Chŏn Pongjun (Jeon Bongjun). Chŏn raised a large peasant army in March and September 1894 to dismantle the outdated political order, create a new world and to foil the imperialist aggression of Japan.

The peasant uprising, which embodied the people's dreams of an egalitarian society and an independent country, was crushed within a year by the government which in turn was pressured by the invading Japanese military force to strike at the peasant forces loyal to Tonghak. Nevertheless, the people's heroic struggle was etched in the collective consciousness of Korean society for a long time, as it loudly voiced the people's determination to change the obsolete social order and create a new and better world.



Progress of the Tonghak Peasant War

The Tonghak Peasant Movement first originated in the southwestern region of the peninsula, and gradually spread like a prairie fire through the central and southern regions. When the Chosŏn government petitioned to Qing to dispatch troops to crush the rebellion, Japan also sent troops to the Korean peninsula. Japan exploited the volatile political situation on the Korean peninsula to set the stage for a military showdown with Qing China and realize its imperialist ambition. It is interesting to note that Japan cited its responsibility to protect the lives and property of the Japanese in Korea as the reason behind its decision to deploy troops in Chosŏn. The two armies inevitably clashed on Chosŏn's territory (the Sino-Japanese War). Having secured victory in its war with China, Japan launched a full-scale attack on the peasant army, which was to become the strongest resistance force against the Japanese colonization of Chosŏn.

Burn the Slave Documents



Leaders of Tonghak Peasant Movement : Chŏn Pongjun(left) and Ch'oe Sihyŏng

Both Chŏn Pongjun (who organized and led the peasant uprising) and Ch'oe Sihyŏng (who initially opposed the idea of staging a rebellion against the state, but later responded to the clarion call for an uprising) dreamt of a world where all people were equal. While Ch'oe Sihyŏng (1827~1898), a religious leader rather than a fighter, argued that everyone should follow the Eastern Learning (Tonghak) and act according to its teachings in order to create a new world, Chŏn Pongjun (1855~1895), an indomitable revolutionary, believed that people should engage in ceaseless struggle and resistance in order to cleanse the world of outdated institutions and foreign influences.

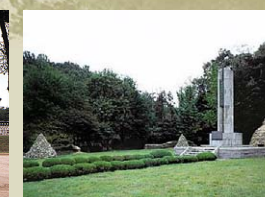
"Investigate the crimes of greedy government officials and harshly punish the guilty, burn the slave documents, punish the evil aristocrats and the rich, and distribute the land equally to everyone for farming."

The above proclamation encompasses some of the policies which the government and peasant leaders agreed to pursue at the height of the 1894 Peasant Movement. The peasants dreamed of a new world free from class-and gender-based discrimination, and hoped to put an end to the government's exploitation of the people.

The most fundamental element of Tonghak philosophy is the belief that all people are equal. It preached that human body is the abode of divinity, and that all humans should be regarded and treated as sacred and divine. Ch'oe Cheu (Choe Jju), the founder of Tonghak, freed two slaves and made one his daughter-in-law and adopted the other as his daughter. The second leader of Tonghak, Ch'oe Sihyŏng (Choe Sihyeong), carried on the founder's beliefs, instructing his followers to consider women as the "leaders of the family."



Hwangt'ohyŏn Battle Site



Uŭmch'i Battle Site



11

Foundation of the Great Han Empire and Resistance against Foreign Aggression

Period 1894~1910

Main Events Kabo Reforms (1894), Proclamation of the Great Han Empire (1895~6), Outbreak of the Righteous Army War

World Boxer Rebellion (1900~1901), Russo-Japanese War (1904)

Chosŏn(Joseon) Dynasty Reborn as the Great Han Empire

When the Tonghak Peasant Movement broke out, Japan illegally dispatched a large military contingent to Korea to crush the rebellion on the pretext of protecting Japanese interests in Korea. The Japanese took over the royal palace in June 1894, and forced Chosŏn to establish a new government. This incident was also one of the causes of war with Qing.

The new government was dominated by the Enlightenment Faction which believed that Chosŏn urgently needed to carry out political and economic reforms and pursue the path of independence. They carried out a series of reform measures such as the abolition of the class system, the introduction of a new political system, and the end of the tributary relationship with Qing, in order to transform the Chosŏn Dynasty into a modern democratic nation. (Kabo Reforms, 1894)

Aggressive interference by Japan and Russia, coupled with internal disputes over the details of the institutional reform, put a halt to the Kabo Reforms. Nevertheless, class discrimination became fully prohibited by law in 1896, and the country's name was changed from Chosŏn to the Great Han Empire. The king assumed the title of emperor, and a number of steps for political and economic reform were taken. This dramatic change was expected to lay a firm foundation for Korea to develop into a fully independent sovereign state where government authority was based on legal provisions and the people's right to equality was guaranteed.



Hwanggung'u (Hwanggungu)
Meaning "Imperial Vault of Heaven," Hwanggung'u is an imperial shrine built in the heart of Seoul to enshrine tablets honoring the lord of heaven and other heavenly and earthly deities. It was once a part of the Hwan'gudan (Hwangudan), or the "Circular Mound Altar," where the accession ceremony for the emperor of the Great Han Empire was held. The sanctuary was demolished during the Japanese colonial rule, leaving only this shrine.

Struggle for Modern Economy and the Reform Movement

For the Great Han Empire to acquire true autonomy and independence, it was imperative to build a healthy national economy, supported by modern productive enterprises.

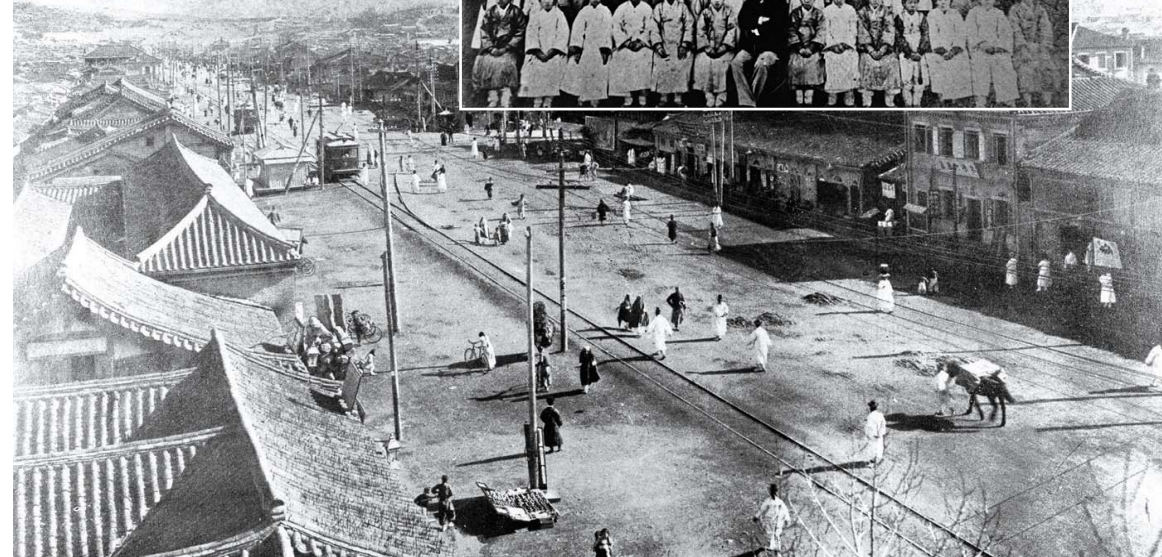
The government promoted and fostered the development of new industries, either by building modern production facilities in a joint effort with the private sector or by offering a certain degree of monopoly in production and sales to private capital which was financing similar projects. Banks were created to attract capital, and schools were founded to spread the knowledge of new technologies throughout the country.

The Great Han Empire was caught in a turbulent whirlpool of change around 1900. New schools opened every day and a considerable number of businesses began to join the production front with the help of new machinery. A city improvement project was fully implemented to enable Seoul to take on the challenge of modernization.

Public Foreign Language School of Inchŏn
The government published a special decree, placing education at the center of nationwide reform in 1895. A modern public education system was introduced soon afterwards.



Streets of Seoul, Early 1900s
The photograph shows the outcome of the city improvement project for Seoul, fully implemented in 1896. An electric streetcar, which started operation in 1899, can be seen on the right of the photograph.



Unfulfilled Dream of a Modern Nation

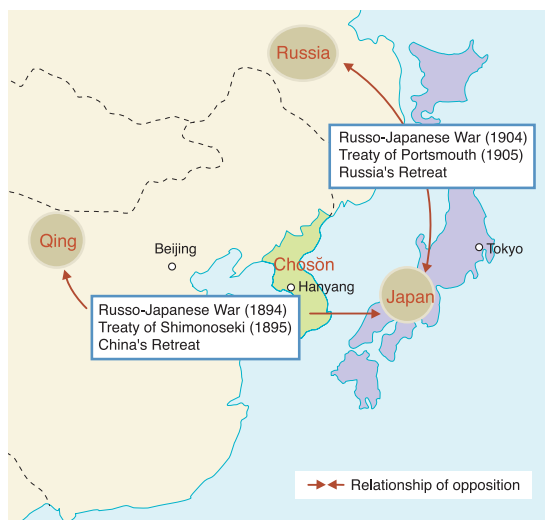
Most businesses run by Koreans could not compete with foreign businesses. Such failure can be attributed to the difference in the size of capital and productivity, and to the government's inability to protect them until they could gain a secure footing in the market.

Unequal treaties imposed on the Great Han Empire by foreign powers guaranteed that foreign merchants could make their entry into the Korean market without bearing the burden of tariffs. Foreign financiers and merchants dominated the Korean market by exploiting their superior capital financing ability and extraterritorial rights. And, most importantly, Japan tried to incorporate the Great Han Empire into the Japanese economy after its military occupied the peninsula in 1904.

When Japan provoked the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, it took control of the major cities and regions of the Great Han Empire. Japan also pressured the Great Han Empire to appoint advisors which it recommended, to each of its government departments. After its victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan further curtailed the diplomatic prerogative of the Great Han Empire by imposing a Protectorate Treaty and heightened the level of its intervention in government affairs.

Japan also abolished the use of the Korean currency and replaced it with a new currency in 1905, enabling Japanese banks to assume total authority with regard to taxation and budget financing, and severely disabling the economy of the Great Han Empire. Japan also accelerated its agricultural aggression in rural areas by allowing Japanese people to purchase land and run large-scale farms in Korea.

Russo-Japanese War
Russia and Japan, each trying to take control of Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula, collided in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904. Following its victory in the Sino-Japanese War, Japan pushed forward a policy to enhance its wealth and military power; with assistance from the US and the UK, who were concerned about the increasing influence of Russia. Japan won the war in just one year and her plan to invade Korea was implemented with support from the US and the UK.



War of the Righteous Army



An Chunggŭn (An Junggeun, 1879~1910), a member in the righteous army campaign, assassinated Ito Hirobumi, the leading political figure of Meiji Japan and chief architect of Japan's policy of imperialist occupation of Chosŏn. An Chunggŭn gave voice to the anger that smoldered within the heart of every Korean.

Koreans actively resisted Japanese aggression when Japanese troops set foot on the Korean Peninsula: Confucian scholars from noble families and peasants came together to organize a number of 'righteous army' units at around the time that the Russo-Japanese War broke out. The righteous army, or ūibyŏng (uibyeong), was thus named because it was composed of people who had voluntarily formed the army in the name of justice against Japan.

The War of the Righteous Army began in 1895 and had spread nationwide by 1906. When the Japanese imperialists disbanded the military force of Chosŏn in 1907, tens of thousands of dismissed soldiers joined different righteous army units from most regions of the country. They fought thousands of battles and skirmishes against the Japanese military and pro-Japanese government officials between 1907 and 1909. They also went as far as to organize a national federation for a better-orchestrated campaign against the Japanese military force occupying Seoul in 1907.

The War of the Righteous Army was also a struggle to break free from the Japanese influence in everyday life. As Fred A. McKenzie quoted the words of a leader of the Righteous Army in his book, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, it was a struggle to defend the country's independence and freedom, the true values of life. The leader of the Righteous Army admitted that 'the men are in anything but a good way', but added: "We may have to die. Well, so let it be. It is much better to die as a free man than to live as a slave of Japan."



This photograph was taken by McKenzie, who reported the righteous army's activities to the British press based on his personal experience in the field for nearly two months.

The Patriotic (Cultural) Enlightenment Movement and a Budding Modern Culture

While the righteous army engaged in armed resistance, a number of intellectuals launched energetic campaigns to recover the country's autonomy. They evoked enthusiastic response from the general public.

The most notable changes were made in the education sector. Countless people from all classes, including the royal family, government officials, merchants, businessmen, and retired intellectuals, founded private schools; some 5,000 new schools were opened nationwide in just 3~4 years. People believed that educating young people would pave the way for recovering the country's autonomy and to building a new society capable of standing on an equal footing with the foreign powers.

Intellectuals also formed academic societies and published newspapers and magazines to share their knowledge with the masses. Their patriotic campaigns elevated national pride and intensified the nationalist consciousness of the Korean people. They also initiated the National Debt Repayment Movement through which they hoped to pay back the financial debt to Japan and thus regain control over the economy. This movement was joined by men and women of all ages and social origins nationwide.

Thanks to the powerful wave of nationalist movements to recover the country's autonomy, the hold of class and regional discrimination on people's minds became tenuous. The tension between the need to import new culture and to preserve the traditional values was also resolved. Faced with Japan's aggression, people came together as one and eagerly explored the ways to build a new society in which the traditional Korean values and Western technologies could coexist harmoniously.



The education promotion campaign of the time, intended to save the country through education, resulted in the foundation of the modern education system in Korea. The photographs show a school (founded in 1900, left) and the Taehan Maeil Sinbo (launched in 1904, right). The Taehan Maeil Sinbo (Daehan Maeil Sinbo), a representative newspaper of the period, used Korean characters alongside Chinese characters, and even used Korean characters alone in some cases.

T'aegŭkki (Taegukgi) and Aegukka (Aegukga)

When the king was considered the absolute ruler of a country, he alone stood as a representative of the country, and a dragon was used as an emblem for the king. However, as the new administrative system was being created, the royalty and the state became separated, and a flag and national anthem were created to represent the country as a whole. At around the time the Great Han Empire was founded, and when people united against Japanese aggression, Korea's national flag and national anthem came into being.

The Korean flag, also called T'aegŭkki, was officially released and unfurled for the first time in 1882 when Korea began to engage in diplomatic relationships with foreign countries. The T'aegŭk symbol, a red and blue circle sitting at the center of a white background with four black trigrams, originated from the Book of Changes, an ancient Chinese philosophical text. It represents the fundamental principle of evolutionary change creating the harmonious union of all things.

Aegukka, Korea's national anthem, starting with the words "Until the East Sea's waves are dry, (and) Mount Paektusan worn away" was sung to a part of the tune from "Korea Fantasia" by An Ik t'ae (An Iktae), and won wide acceptance by 1936. The first national anthem was chosen in 1902, but that text included a number of expressions from the tradition that held the emperor (king) to be the country's sole representative. A number of musical pieces called Aegukka also became popular around 1895.



ŭibyŏng Ko Kwangsun's "Purwonbok" (Burwonbok) T'aegŭkki
This T'aegŭkki was carried by a ŭibyŏng leader Ko Kwangsun (Go Kwangsun), who fought against the Japanese aggression in the Mt. Chiri (Jiri) area until he was killed in 1907. It bears the word "Purwonbok," which means "We will soon recover independence."



12 Loss of Sovereignty and Commencement of a Nationalist Movement

Period 1910~1930

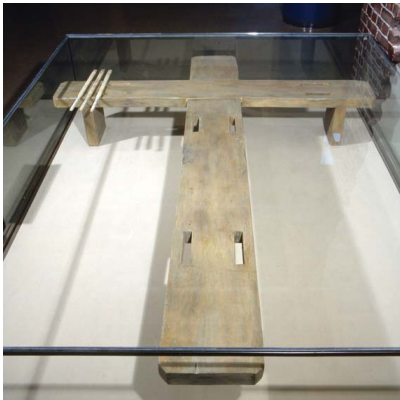
Main Events Imperial Japan's annexation of Korea (1910), March First Movement (1919), Establishment of the Provisional Government of Korea (1919)

World 1911 Revolution in China, World War I (1914~1918), and the Russian Revolution (1917)

Implications of the Annexation of Korea by Imperialist Japan

In 1910, imperialist Japan annexed Korea (the Chosŏn Dynasty) by force, massacring patriotic Koreans who offered resistance to the policy of colonization and unleashing violence and terror in Korea in order to silence the Korean people into submission. A large number of Korean troops were killed or arrested. With the exception of some religious groups, most of the organizations formed among Koreans were dissolved, and the majority of the country's newspapers and magazines met the same fate.

During the colonial rule of Korea, the Office of the Governor-General of Chosŏn adopted a series of economic policies designed to plunder Korean assets and agricultural produce, allowing landowners to collect higher farm rents than before from tenant farmers and to take more agricultural produce to Japan. Koreans wishing to establish companies had to obtain a permit from the Governor-General. As such, Korea became a supply base for Japan and a market for Japanese goods.



Whip for Lashing

The item in the photo is a whip. Although banned in Japan, it was used in colonial Korea to punish Koreans for minor offenses. Many Koreans died as a result of the intense torture inflicted upon Koreans for engaging in patriotic activities which Japan regarded as seditious and subversive.

Nationalist Movements and the Growth of Republican Ideology

The Japanese colonialists deployed their troops in major cities throughout Korea. The Governor-General, an active army officer, applied rules no less stringent than war-time military laws to Koreans. With the forceful annexation of the country in 1910, even basic rights were denied to Koreans, who were subjected to arbitrary acts of violence perpetrated by the Japanese army and police. Korean resistance movements were launched, including attacks on Japanese government offices and officers and pro-Japanese Koreans, and attacks against Japanese troops along the borders with China and Russia. Diplomatic efforts were initiated to inform the governments of foreign countries of the nation's status as an independent country and Koreans' determination to regain their sovereignty.

Since the king of Chosŏn [also known as the emperor of the Great Han Empire (1897~1910)] had handed over the nation's sovereignty to Japan, Koreans who were engaged in the resistance struggle against the colonialists came to believe that the new nation they would seek to establish after regaining national sovereignty should be a democratic republic. This belief stemmed from their efforts to unite the whole nation as one in the fight against the colonialists. It was also a reflection of the growth of civil rights over the years, while the 1911 Chinese Revolution, which led to the establishment of a republican government in that country, also had an impact on the thinking of many Koreans.

Declaration of Unity among Koreans

In 1917, national leaders, including Sin Kyusik (Sin Gyusik) and Pak ūnsik (Pak Eunsik), declared their determination to direct the organized struggle for independence through a provisional government and asked the entire Korean nation to participate in the movement.

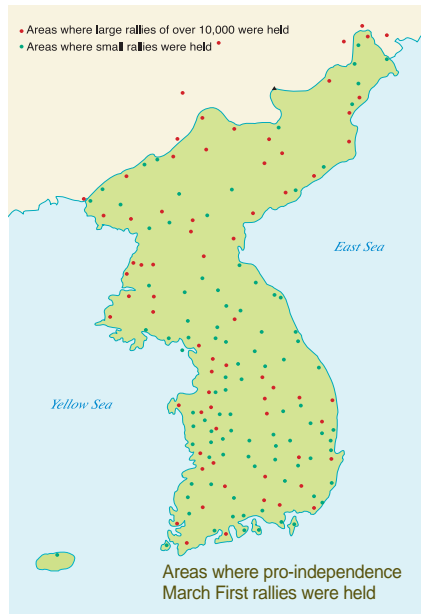
They stressed that the Provisional Government should not be the government in exile of the Korean Empire, but a republican government of the people.



March First Movement and Provisional Government of Korea

“We hereby declare that Korea is an independent country and that Koreans are people with sovereign rights. With this declaration, we intend to make it known throughout the entire world that we believe in the cause of the equality of all human beings, and that all Koreans, of both the present and future generations, should be able to live with dignity and self-respect.”

On March 1, 1919, a large number of Koreans gathered in ten cities across the nation, including Seoul, demanding the nation's independence. The Japanese colonialists responded with violence, and the army and police were launched against the peaceful movement, arresting and killing many of those participating in the demonstration. Koreans continued to hold gatherings in many parts of the country for about two months, making it clear that they desperately wanted their independence. Imperial Japan once again used extreme violence in the crackdown on these demonstrators.

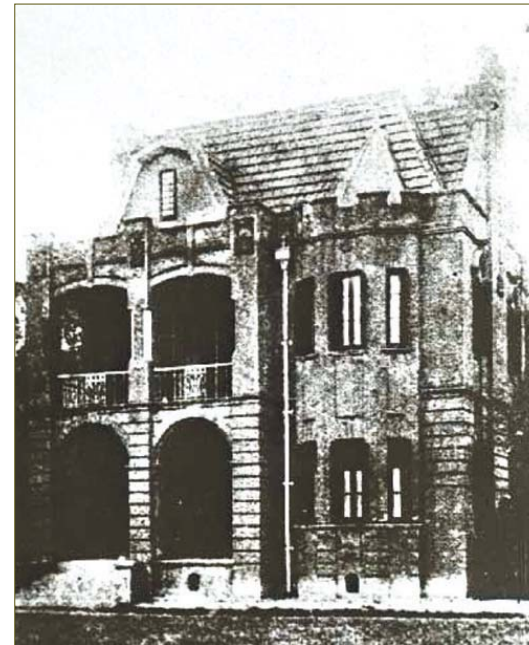


A church in Cheam ri (Jeam ri), burnt down by Japanese colonialists

Protest meetings demanding independence were held in 229 out of a total of 232 administrative units, large and small, throughout Korea. In the process, 7,509 Koreans were killed, 15,849 injured and 46,306 were imprisoned [Source : The Bloody History of the Korean Independence Movements by Pak ūnsik]. This photo shows a church in Cheam ri, Suwon that was burnt down by Japanese troops as a reprisal against the independence demonstrations. Some 28 Koreans locked inside the church building were burnt alive. (April 15, 1919).



In the early stages, religious organizations and students played a leading role in the independence movement. However, as it spread nationally, it attracted people from all walks of life, with the exception of a small number of pro-Japanese Koreans. Galvanised by such a process, ordinary Koreans came to realize that they were the key to the nation's survival. The Independence Movement of 1919 led to the establishment of a provisional government outside the country, aimed at driving the colonialists out of the country by every available means. In September 1919, an integrated Provisional Government of Korea was established under an agreement between the disparate factions. The Provisional Government was not the government in exile of the Korean Empire : its members made it clear that the new nation they hoped to establish after regaining its sovereignty would be a democratic republic in which all power would be vested in the people. Obviously, the Korean independence movement was also a revolution for the replacement of autocracy with democracy.



The building which used to house the Provisional Government of Korea

The Provisional Government of Korea, established in 1919, became a leading organization for carrying out independence movements with the participation of many anti-Japanese fighters. However, other independence movement organizations emerged in the mid-1920s due to a disagreement over the methods of the various independence movements. The Provisional Government eventually succeeded in integrating the different groups of nationalist fighters in China into one single entity in the 1940s.

Active Independence Movements inside and outside the Country

In the 1920s, different factions were engaged in fight against Japanese troops in their own ways along the border with China and Russia. In 1920, a Korean army unit led by Hong Pōmdo (Hong Beomdo) and Kim Chwajin (Kim Jwajin) dealt severe blows against Japanese troops in battles in Pong'o dong (Bongo dong) and Ch'ōngsan ri (Cheongsan ri). An organization named ūiyōltan (Uiyeoldan) led by Kim W'ōnbong attacked Japanese government offices in Korea on many occasions. On other fronts, students, farmers and workers formed organizations against Japan's colonial policy in a struggle to protect their own rights. Women also actively took part in the anti-Japanese independence movement. Various organizations launched movements designed to build the Korean people's strength, encouraging Koreans to buy products made by Korean business firms and join forces in a fund-raising campaign to establish a higher education institution. The Russian Revolution of 1917 influenced the thoughts of many Koreans. Young intellectuals, farmers and workers were actively engaged in activities for national liberation, while seeking social revolution.



Commemorative photograph of victory at the Ch'ōngsan ri battle
A photo of a Korean Independence Army unit operating in Manchuria right after the battle against Japanese troops in Ch'ōngsan ri in October 1920. They dealt a severe blow to the Japanese, killing 1,254 enemy troops.

Pang Chōnghwan (Bang Jeonghwan) and Children's Day



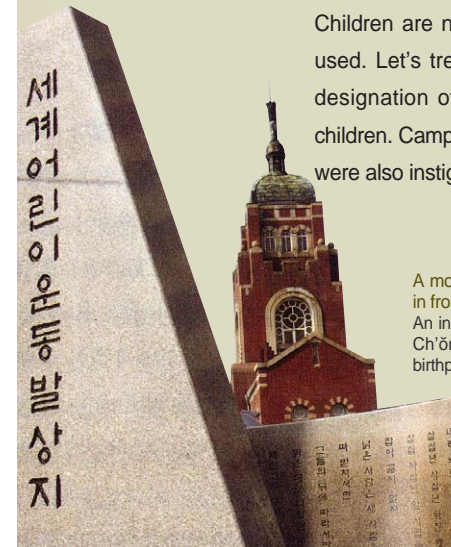
Pang Chōnghwan
He was the forerunner of the children's movement, and also contributed to the cause of children by publishing a children's magazine and popularizing children's literature.

"Let's treat children as we would adults. Let's not engage children under the age of 14 in work, paid or not. Let's help children receive education in a peaceful environment and play to their heart's content at home or outside in public facilities." (The Youth Movement Association's declaration of the Youth Movement in 1923)

In the 1920s, Koreans were actively engaged in the movement to build a new society where everyone could live freely and equally, putting an end to age-old practices and institutions under the influence of the March First Movement which started in 1919. Young believers of the Ch'ōndokyo (Tonghak) Religion, who taught that humans are like heavenly beings, played a leading role in carrying forward the movement to pay respect to individual children. One prominent member of the movement, Pang Chōnghwan, said, "Children do not belong to their parents. Children are not possessions to be controlled, manipulated or used. Let's treat them as we would adults." He proposed the designation of Children's Day and published magazines for children. Campaigns to compose and popularize children's songs were also instigated.

A monument to mark the origin of children's movement, erected in front of the Chōn' dokyo headquarters.

An inscription on the monument erected at the Headquarters of the Ch'ōndo Religion in Jongno gu, Seoul says that the site is the birthplace of the worldwide movement for the protection of children.





13 Growth of Nationalist Movements and Preparations for the Establishment of a New Nation

Period 1931~1945

Main Events Heroic Act of Yun Ponggil (Yun Bonggil, 1932) at HongKou Park, Creation of the Chosŏn (Korean) Volunteer Army (1938), Creation of the Korean Independence Army (1940)

World Invasion of Manchuria by Imperialist Japan (1931), Sino-Japanese War (1937~1945), Pacific War (1941~1945)

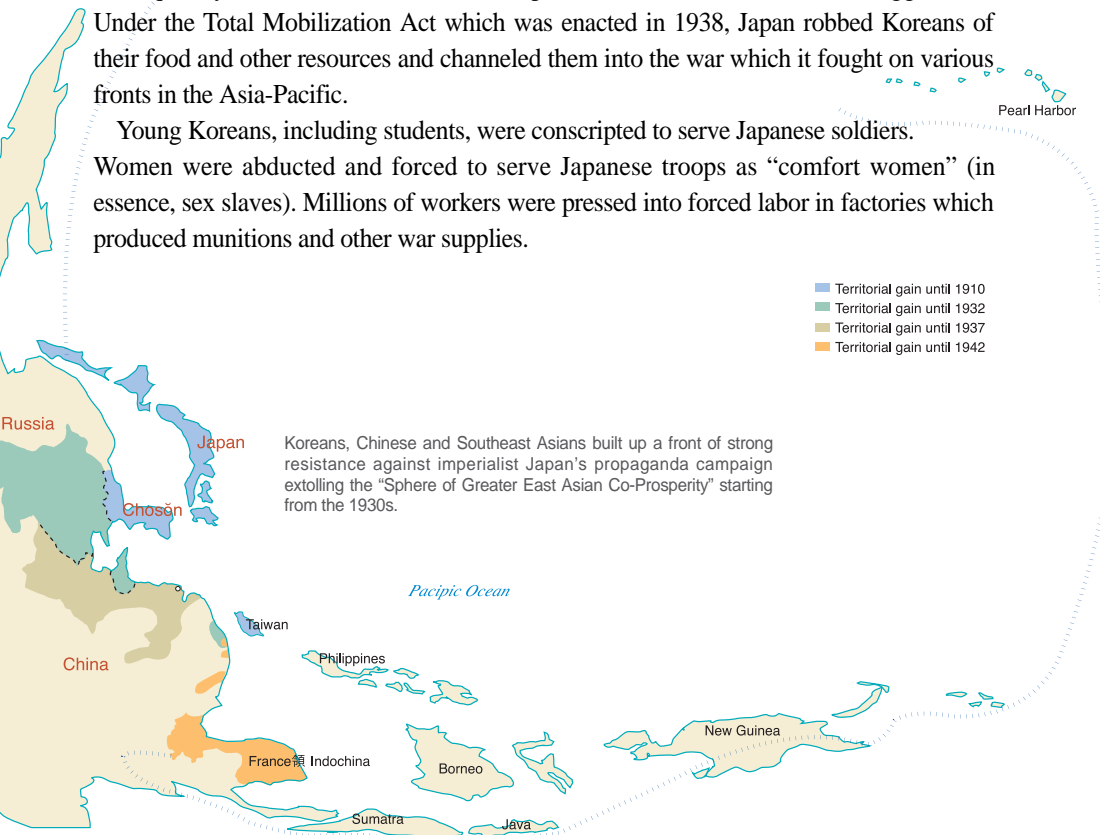
Imperial Japan Used Koreans in its Wars of Aggression

In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, and Inner Manchuria was proclaimed an independent state, Manchukuo. The last Manchu emperor, Pu Yi, was then placed on the throne to head a Japanese puppet government.

Japan started invading Chinese territory in the following year, and began waging all-out war with China in 1937. In 1941, it launched an invasion of Southeast Asia and subsequently declared war on the U.S. Japan used Koreans in its wars of aggression. Under the Total Mobilization Act which was enacted in 1938, Japan robbed Koreans of their food and other resources and channeled them into the war which it fought on various fronts in the Asia-Pacific.

Young Koreans, including students, were conscripted to serve Japanese soldiers.

Women were abducted and forced to serve Japanese troops as “comfort women” (in essence, sex slaves). Millions of workers were pressed into forced labor in factories which produced munitions and other war supplies.



Japan used the slogan of “Japan and Korea are One Entity” as a rhetorical device to justify the mobilization of Koreans in its wars of aggression. Koreans were prohibited from using their own language and forced to learn Japanese. Japan also attempted to distort Korean history and erase Korean culture. Koreans were even forced to change their names, including family names, to Japanese names.

Stringent measures were taken to block Koreans’ anti-Japanese activities. Virtually all activities, public and private, were under close surveillance by the military police and police force. Every anti-Japanese activity met with harsh punishment. Koreans were denied even the most basic human rights. The publication in Korean of almost all the country’s newspapers and magazines, which were partly restored in a conciliatory gesture following the 1919 Independence Movement, was stopped. With the exception of schools and religious organizations, most Korean organizations were once again dissolved.

The Japanese colonialists coerced Korean intellectuals and artists to legitimize and support their policy of aggression by all means.



Snared

The Japanese imperial authorities lured or forced numerous innocent Korean girls and young women into sexual slavery. Records show that as many as 200,000 young Korean women, mostly aged 15~18, were caught and sent to battle fronts far away from home to service the ‘needs’ of the Japanese imperial war machine. The picture shown here was painted by Kim Sundŏk, who was forced to lead the life of a “Comfort Woman”.



Korean Comfort Women

“Comfort Women” (sex slaves) for Japanese troops-Imperial Japanese troops operated “comfort women” stations near their barracks during the Pacific War.

War of Independence Rekindled

In the early stages of the war, Japan won a series of victories in Manchuria and China relatively easily. While some Koreans certainly became pessimistic about the nation's independence as they heard about the series of victories reaped by Japan, others predicted Japan's eventual defeat in the war against China, the Soviet Union, and the U.S. They joined forces with the Chinese in their fight against imperialist Japan and looked for ways to collaborate with the Soviet Union and the U.S.

In 1932, the Korean Patriotic Association led by Kim Ku (Kim Gu) attempted to assassinate the Japanese Emperor Hirohito. Yun Ponggil, a member of the association, planted a bomb at a venue in Shanghai where the Japanese army organized a function to celebrate Emperor Hirohito's birthday. In this bomb blast many high ranking Japanese officials, including Yoshinori Shirakawa, a general in the Japanese Imperial Army, lost their lives, and many more were injured. The incident inspired confidence among Koreans and helped to reinforce the ties between Koreans and Chinese.

Around that time, Koreans and Chinese organized an allied force to fight against the Japanese troops deployed in Manchuria. The Chosŏn Revolutionary Army and the Korean Independence Army fought in southern Manchuria and northeastern Manchuria, respectively. In mountainous areas along the border between Korea and Manchuria, the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Force fought Japanese troops.



Yun Ponggil and Kim Ku
Members of the Korean Patriotic Association signed a written pledge to the effect that they would fight to the death, and were firm in their determination to help their nation recover its independence. The person on the left is Kim Ku, the leader of the association. The person on the right is Yun Ponggil, a member of the association. Kim Ku (1876~1949) led the Provisional Government of Korea from the mid-1920s, and in the post-liberation era he made efforts to prevent the establishment of two separate regimes across the 38th parallel.



Yi Pongch'ang (1900~1932) who threw a bomb to the emperor of Japan
There is a written oath attached to his chest, which reads : "I do solemnly swear with this hot, dedicated heart that I, as a member of the Korean Patriots Corps, will kill the head of our enemy to recover the independence and freedom of our fatherland."

In the late-1930s, Koreans joined forces with the Chinese in their fight for independence in areas controlled by the Guomindang (Kuomintang) and the Communist Party of China. They could not engage in activities in Japanese-controlled Manchuria.

In 1938, Kim Wonbong and others organized the Korean Volunteer Army with the help of the Chinese government. In 1940, the Provisional Government of Korea led by Kim Ku and others organized the Korean Independence Army. In 1942, the Korean Volunteer Army was further strengthened when those operating in the areas controlled by the Chinese Communist Party joined it. In addition, waging struggle against Japanese troops in China, they fought in India in collaboration with British troops. They also participated in the U.S army's clandestine operations against Japanese troops on the Korean Peninsula.

Korea's nationalist leaders engaged in secret activities in Korea and were encouraged by active independence movements which were carried out overseas. They maintained organizations of farmers and workers and were engaged in the effort to win independence and protect their right to life.



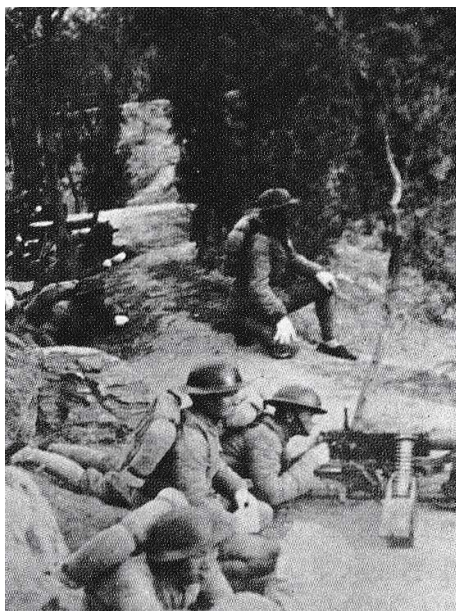
Activities of the Independence Army in the 1930s

Preparations for the Establishment of a New Country

The Korean independence movement also represented a campaign for the establishment of a modern state, anchored in the principles of democracy and the republican form of government. Those fighting for independence both within and outside the country discussed the most desirable form of the new country which was to be established after Korea's liberation from colonial rule. The Provisional Government of Korea, which has succeeded in integrating various nationalist factions, officially enacted the General Principles for the Establishment of a New Nation. : To quote "The new nation shall adopt the system of universal suffrage so that all people may participate in politics, adopt the system of state ownership so as to ensure that all people have equal property rights, provide equal rights to education, provide support for the right to self-determination of peoples both inside and outside the nation, so as to eliminate inequality between peoples and nations ..."

Those who fought for independence, regardless of their ideologies, dreamed of establishing a new nation based on the sacrosanct ideals of freedom and equality. There was a general consensus on the point that after the achievement of independence, a democratic government would be formed through a general election.

However, imperialist Japan's unconditional surrender came before those Korean leaders, scattered over many places in the fight against the Japanese, could reach a grand compromise. The U.S. and Soviet troops occupied South and North Korea, respectively. Thus, the liberation from colonial rule signified the beginning of yet another ordeal for the Korean nation.



A drilling scene of the Korean Liberation Army
In 1943, the leaders of the U.S., the U.K. and China issued the Cairo Declaration stating that Korea would become an independent state following the defeat of Japan in the Second World War. The contents of the declaration became widely known both inside and outside Korea.

Know Thyself!



Chŏng Inbo (Jeong Inbo, 1892~1950)
Chŏng made efforts to systematize the process of self-reliant development in Korean history through the study of scholars of practical Learning. The book on the right is Chŏng Yak-yong's "Collected Works," the fruit of research conducted by a group of scholars led by Chŏng Inbo.

A Collection of Books Written by Chŏng Yak-yong

During the colonial period, Korea was introduced to new cultural forms and modern academic and cultural institutions. However, the Japanese colonialists attempted to distort the nation's history and traditional cultures. They falsely claimed that Korea represented a stagnant society with no inherent capacity for independence and self-rule.

They also claimed that Korea required external intervention to propel it along the path of modernity, and that Japan's colonial administration guaranteed a happy and prosperous future for the Korean people.

However, many Koreans adopted a different perspective in their bid to systematize the study of their history and culture. Korean historians focused on the oppression and violence which had been unleashed by imperialist Japan in Korea and unmasked their hypocritical claim that Japan served as an agent of modernity and civilization. They also shed light on the inherent capacity of the Korean people for social and cultural development. Many Korean linguists dedicated themselves to the study and teaching of the Korean language, despite the colonialists' attempts to block such efforts.

During the colonial period, the Office of the Governor-General of Chosŏn aggressively exploited the human and material resources of Korea to meet the imperialist interests and expansionist ambition of Japan through the war of aggression in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan also tried to obliterate Korean history and culture. However, Koreans displayed unrelenting determination in resisting such measures. They continued to study their language and history. In the 1930s, they even launched a Scientific Koreans Campaign, defying Japan's cultural aggression.



14 Establishment of the Republic of Korea and the National Division

Period 1945~1960

Main Events Liberation from the Japanese colonial rule (1945), Establishment of separate governments in South and North Korea (1948), Korean War (1950~1953)

World End of World War II (1945), Start of the Cold War (1947), Establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949), The Sino-Soviet Split (1956~1969)

Liberation and Movement for the Establishment of a New Nation



The Liberation of 1945

On August 15, 1945, Japan declared its unconditional surrender to the Allied Forces and the era of liberation, the long-cherished dream of the Korean people, finally dawned.

On that day, the nation's leaders, including YŏUnhyŏng (Yeo Unhyeong), organized the Preparatory Committee for the Establishment of the Korean Nation. Activities were initiated nationwide for the said preparations, and those who had left their homeland in order to continue their

struggle for national independence from bases overseas returned home.

However, the situation developed in a way that Koreans neither expected nor desired. With the collapse of the imperialist structure of Japan, the troops of the Soviet Union and the U.S. occupied the areas north and south of the 38th Parallel, respectively. Each of the two superpowers exercised their influence in such a way as to establish a friendly political regime in the part of the country that it occupied. This had a disastrous impact on the long-sought goal of the Korean people for the establishment of a unified and independent Korean republic, resulting in the division of the country into South and North Korea.

Establishment of the Republic of Korea and the Division of Korea



Establishment of the Government of the Republic of Korea

On May 10, 1948, a general election was held, based on the system of universal suffrage. The new government was established under a new constitution enacted on July 17 of the same year. Leftists and liberal centrists boycotted the election, because it was to result in the establishment of a government in the South only.

Following the arrival of the Occupation Forces, the two Koreas began to develop mutually dichotomous interests. In the South, the U.S. facilitated the establishment of a rightist government. In the North, the Soviet Union helped leftists to emerge as the dominant force.

The leftist regime in the North initiated a series of revolutionary policies that conservatives found difficult to accept, believing that they merely represented a ploy to extend the revolution to the entire peninsula. They also claimed that the North was being used as a forward base for the expansion of revolution. The right-wing politicians in the South expressed their opposition to Communism and insisted on the establishment of a separate government in the South first.

Two meetings between the US and the Soviet Union were convened between 1946 and 1947 to discuss the formation of a single government of a

unified Korea. However, the deepening schism of the Cold War impeded the progress of the negotiations, and it was finally decided that a government in the South be first established through an election in accordance with the UN resolution.

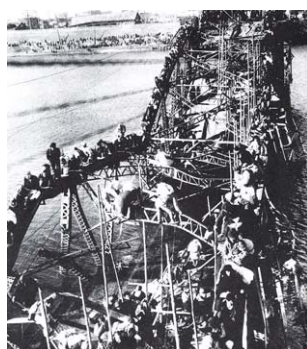
On August 15, 1948, the Government of the Republic of Korea was established in the South. By 1949, the troops of both superpowers had pulled out of Korea. It was a historic achievement that the principle of democracy, where all powers lay with the people, had finally been institutionalized in the country. Meanwhile, the Soviet-supported leftist revolutionists in the North established their own government and named it the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Korean War

The country was thus divided for the first time since Silla achieved peninsular unification some 1,300 years previously. Each side insisted that it was the only legitimate regime on the entire peninsula, flatly denying the existence of the other side. The South openly declared that it would eventually advance to the North and absorb the territory currently under the control of the communists. The North also declared its intention to expand its revolution to the South.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean troops attacked the South on many fronts along the 38th Parallel. The Kim Il-sung regime was assured of support from the Soviet Union and China. The North Korean forces occupied Seoul on the third day of the offensive which it had launched, and then swiftly pressed southward. Two days later, the U.S. decided to come to the rescue of South Korea, and soon afterwards UN Forces, composed of troops dispatched from sixteen countries, reached the Korean peninsula.

The South Korean troops continued to retreat to the southeastern tip of the peninsula until September 1950. With the participation of a major UN force, the South Korean troops launched counteroffensives and reoccupied most of the areas on the peninsula by mid-October.



Han'gang Bridge destroyed by the war
During the Korean War, the South Korean troops and the UN Forces, including troops from the U.S., the U.K. and France, fought the North Korean and Chinese troops. The Soviet Union and Japan also played an important role, although they did not participate in the war officially. Most of the countries involved in World War II took part in the Korean War, transforming it into an international war which approximated World War II in terms of human and material loss.



P'anmunjŏm (Panmunjeom), the Joint Security Area

The Korean War, which began on June 25, 1950, ended on July 27, 1953. P'anmunjŏm, as shown in the photo, was the site where the Armistice Agreement was signed on July 27, 1953. It has also been the site of subsequent political and military talks between the two Koreas. The Military Demarcation Line runs through the middle of the table (in the centre of the room).

With the participation of a large number of Chinese troops, the Korean War turned into a confrontation between the capitalist camp led by the U.S. and the socialist camp. In a way, it was a 'hot' war waged on the Korean Peninsula in the era of the Cold War.

With the entry of Chinese troops into the war, the South Korean and UN forces retreated once again. The two sides remained in a state of stalemate along the 38th Parallel, and it gradually became clear that the war would not end with either side claiming victory. The U.S. and the Soviet Union initiated armistice talks within one year of the commencement of the war. However, the two sides continued to fight fiercely for two more years as a result of both sides' desire to end the war in a more advantageous position. By the end of the war, the death toll had reached 4.5 million.

On July 27, 1953, the armistice agreement was signed, although South Korea insisted on fighting until it regained control over the entire peninsula, and refused to sign it. The two sides also failed to agree to a regime of lasting peace.



North Korean invasion



Participation of the UN forces in the Korean War



Participation of the Chinese Red Army in the Korean War

The Two Koreas Go Their Own Ways

The Korean War led to a rigidity in both the politics and the social atmosphere of the two Koreas. In the South, President Syngman Rhee sought to establish a long-term dictatorship through an amendment to the Constitution, using the current state of war as a pretext. In the North, Kim Il-sung ousted his rivals after holding them responsible for the results of the war.

The South adopted an anti-communist stance, signed a mutual defense treaty with the U.S., cut down on the number of state-owned corporations, and consolidated the market economy system, guaranteeing the entrepreneurial freedom of private businesses to the greatest possible extent.

In the North, steps were taken for the rapid transformation of the state into a socialist system through the nationalization of major industries and the formation of collective farms. Following the war, aid from the Socialist Bloc was gradually reduced. North Korea also cleverly used the growing rift between China and the Soviet Union to strengthen its independent position.

The South underwent a dramatic cultural change, thanks to the freedom its citizens enjoyed, the adoption of the market economy, and the rapid spread of American-style pop culture. The North attempted to reinterpret traditional national culture on the principles of socialist ideology, and a culture of collectivism struck root.

In the aftermath of the Korean War, hostility between the two Koreas intensified, and the chasm between two antagonistic states widened. This schism in the post-liberation era also gave rise to a social culture that legitimized the bipolarization of the society.



A poster of *From Russia With Love* (left) and North Korean youth corps. The 1950s was a turning point in the formation of mutually polarized cultures in the South and North. On the left is a poster for an American film, a typical symbol of American-style pop culture based on individualism. On the right is a photo showing North Koreans engaged in a group activity, symbolizing its collectivist culture.

The Public Space and the Private Space

Ch'oe In-hun's novel *Kwangjang* (Gwangjang or "The Public Space") published in 1960, still strikes a chord with many people. Perhaps it is because the problem he attempted to describe in his work still remains unsettled in their hearts.

Yi Myŏngjun (Yi Myeongjun), the hero of the novel, is originally from the South. He somehow becomes an enlisted man in the North's army, and eventually becomes a POW in the Korean War. After the war is over, the two sides agree to an exchange of POWs. He wants to be part of neither side.

To him, the South appears to be a place with no "public space" (*gwangjang*), i.e. individualism abounds but there is no space for community, while the North appears to be a place where the importance of the *gwangjang* is unreasonably stressed, with the private space denied to individuals. What then will be his choice?



POW detention center, Kōje island

At the time of the signing of the Armistice Agreement, the number of POWs held by the two sides stood at 12,700 (for the North) and 75,800 (for the South). The number of those who refused to choose either side came to 86. The novel is spun around the life of one of these POWs.



15 Industrialization and Democratization

Period 1960~1992

Main Events The April Revolution (1960), Launch of the Five-Year Economic Development Plans (1962), The May 18th Democratic Movement (1980), The June Democracy Movement (1987), The South North Basic Agreement (1991).

World The Vietnam War (1959~1975), End of the Cold War (1989).

The April Revolution and the May Military Coup

The April Revolution (1960) and the May Military Coup (1961) constitute the two most important events in the nation's modern history.

In April 1960, a large number of citizens took part in massive protest demonstrations against President Syngman Rhee's attempt to stay in power illegally through a rigged election. He had already extended his tenure twice by amending the Constitution. The police tried to block the demonstrators, opening fire on them. Ultimately, however, the dictator yielded to the citizen uprising, which had been led mainly by students [The April Revolution].

In the following year, a group of military officers led by Pak Chunghee overthrew the civilian government in a coup d'état. They defined the process of democratization as a state of social confusion and promised to shore up the nation's defense capability so as to meet any possible military challenge that the North may pose, stabilize society, and secure economic development. The military regime led by President Pak Chunghee attempted to win popular support through economic development, which led to growth-oriented development strategies designed to achieve tangible outcomes [The May Military Coup].



The April Revolution (1960)

During the April Revolution, a total of 184 civilians were killed and more than 6,000 were injured amid clashes with the police. A democratic government (the Second Republic) in July 1960 under a new Constitution was achieved only due to the supreme sacrifice made by these heroes. However, the new government was overthrown by a military coup that occurred in May of the following year.

Commencement of Industrialization

In the 1950s, Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world, with the majority of its people engaged in the agricultural sector. However, the country underwent rapid changes as a result of the process of industrialization that was commenced in the 1960s.

In 1962, the country launched its first Five-Year Economic Development Plan with the necessary funds borrowed from foreign countries. It adopted an export-driven growth strategy, exporting completed goods made with imported machines and raw materials.

The Government built infrastructure and provided support for export-oriented businesses, adopting policies designed to help export-led companies attract foreign investment more easily. The financial policies of the government were advantageous to these entities. A highly skilled and educated workforce produced goods that could compete favorably with those made in industrialized nations.

From 1973, the Government's emphasis was on heavy chemical industries. Large factories were built in the shipbuilding, automobile, electronics, and petrochemical sectors. The proportion of heavy chemical goods in the nation's exports grew larger, and the share of manufacturing also increased dramatically.

In 1979, the country faced a serious economic crisis. Korea's business concerns, which were engaged in heavy chemical industries with foreign capital and governmental support, experienced labor disputes. This situation was a direct consequence of the short-sighted policy of the government that had not taken into account the possibility of a considerable increase in foreign debt and a decline in exports.



Key figures of the May Military Coup

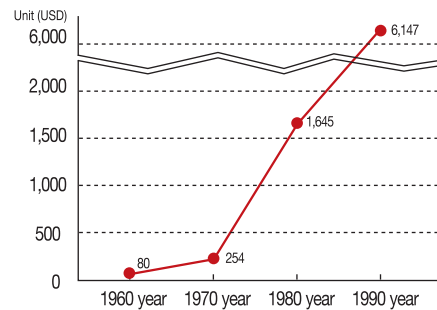
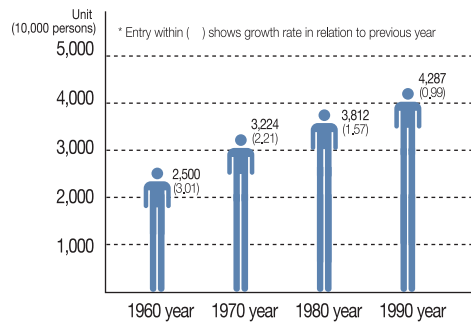
The figure in the right side of the photo is General Pak Chunghee (1917~1979), the leader of the coup. In 1963, he was elected President in a general election (the Third Republic). He remained in power for 18 years by amending the Constitution on two occasions, in 1969 and 1972. He was assassinated in 1979.

Industrialization of Korea and Socio-cultural Innovation

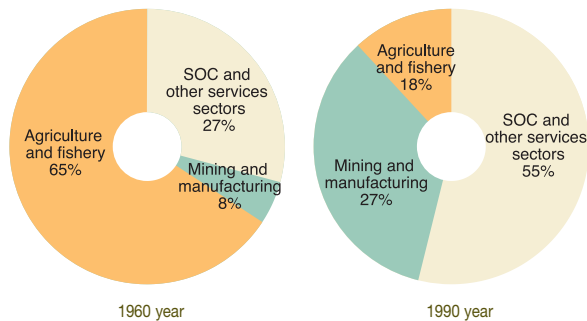
The country gradually recovered from the economic crisis by the mid-1980s, achieving very rapid economic growth for three years from 1986. By the late 1980s, the country had become a modern industrial society with a sustainable base of economic self-reliance.

The majority of the population migrated to the cities, where they worked in the manufacturing and service sectors. As a result, their everyday life, including food, clothing and housing, underwent immeasurable changes. Today the majority of high school graduates receive a tertiary education; and people from different walks of life are exposed to a wide range of pop cultures.

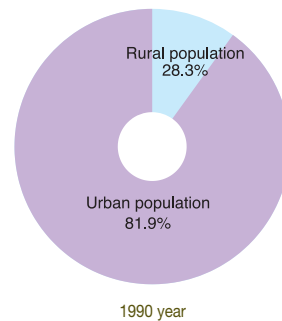
• Total Population (GNP)



• Percentage of population by industries



• Urban population ratio



Expanded Democratization Movement

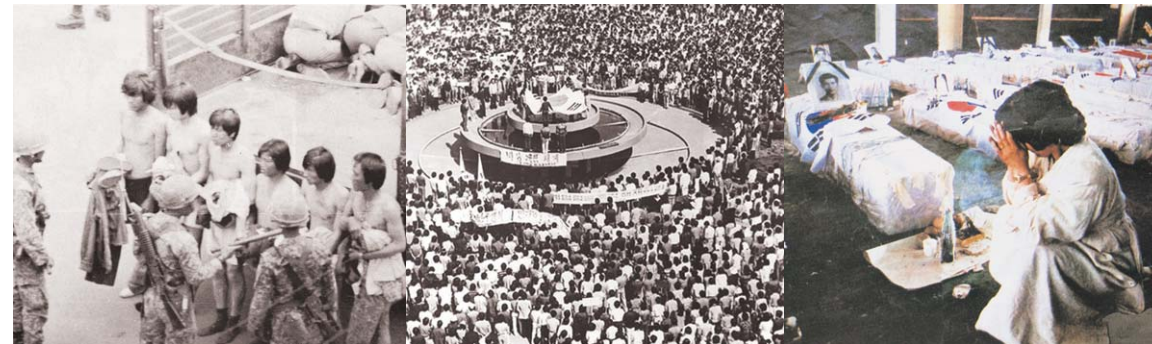
One of the major problems facing the country is the uneven distribution of the fruits of economic growth. Rapid economic growth has caused an imbalance between the urban and rural areas, while workers who played an important role in the country's industrialization process were forced to endure low wages and long hours of work.

In the early 1970s, industrial workers and peasants joined forces to launch a democratization movement. They staged increasingly strident protests against President Pak Chunghee's monopoly of power and the imbalance in the country's economic growth. These movements also addressed the anomalies of the amendments to the Constitution of 1972 which allowed the President to wield absolute and unchallenged authority and remain in power for an indefinite period.

When Pak Chunghee was assassinated in 1979, military generals, including Chun Doo hwan and Roh Tae woo, seized power, disappointing the people who craved for a democratic transition. On May 18, 1980, the citizens of Kwangju (Gwangju) filled the streets of the city to protest the military's seizure of power. Armed servicemen perpetrated indiscriminate acts of atrocity against the peaceful demonstrators, even opening fire in some cases. Despite the fact that the demonstrators were ill-matched with the army which had been mobilized to crush them, they continued their fight for democracy. They demanded the restoration of democracy within ten days [The May Democratization Movement].

The May Democratization Movement

The troops' use of violence against peaceful demonstrators resulted in a people's uprising. The citizens organized an army to protect themselves and tried to negotiate peacefully with the troops. The troops rejected their offer of a negotiation and attacked the demonstrators mercilessly, killing many people.



June Uprising Opens an Era of Full Democracy

After violently suppressing the May Democratization Movement, General Chun Doo hwan was sworn in as President under the new Constitution [The Fifth Republic].

The new regime used violent means to suppress the movements of youth who were struggling for democratization. Collectively, people began to raise voices of discontent and demanded to know the complete truth about the massacre of peaceful demonstrators in Kwangju. They also called for the enactment of a new democratic constitution.

Finally, in June 1987, those working for the democratization of the country, including the main opposition party, joined forces to form the United Democratic Front and waged a large-scale struggle, demanding an end to dictatorship and the adoption of a democratic Constitution. The series of demonstrations that was launched in 22 cities nationwide on June 10 spread to most of the country's major cities for more than two weeks. The dictator finally promised to amend the Constitution for democratization [The June Democratization Struggle].

The following July, many workers began forming labor unions. Office workers and those engaged in professional jobs also started forming associations for the protection of their rights. Citizens' efforts to discard undemocratic elements in daily life continued in a similarly fervent manner, helping open a new era of democratization.

Funeral Procession for Yi Hanyŏl (Yi Hanyeol)

On July 9, 1987, a large crowd gathered at City Hall Plaza in Seoul for the funeral of Yi Hanyŏl, a university student who was killed after being hit by a tear gas canister which had been fired by the police during the June Uprising.



The 24th Olympic Games in Seoul



The event's official emblem incorporated T'aegŭk ("Supreme Ultimate"), the national symbol of Korea. Hodori, the cute image of a Korean tiger, was adopted as a mascot for the event.

The 24th Olympic Games were held in Seoul and several other cities from September 17 to October 2, 1988. The entire country was united in its will to make the event a grand success. The country caught the attention of the entire world during the Games, especially since the preceding two Olympic Games had been marred by boycotts.

The 22nd Olympiad, held in Moscow was boycotted by many countries, including Korea and the U.S., in protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The countries of the Soviet bloc

retaliated by refusing to participate in the 23rd Olympics which were held in Los Angeles. The 24th Olympics held in Seoul was indeed the largest sports event in history in terms of the number of participating athletes from both blocs.

The event also served as an occasion to show the rest of the world that Korea, a country rich in culture and tradition, had set a powerful example of successful industrialization which commenced in the early 1960s, and that it had achieved a successful democratization with the concerted efforts of the people. During the event, many Koreans contributed to the success of the event by working as volunteers for foreign visitors.

The event helped to enhance the country's status in the international community and

enabled the country to engage in closer exchange with the Soviet bloc.



The opening ceremony of the 1988 Seoul Olympics.



16 Korea in the 21st Century

Spread of Democracy and Reconciliation between the Two Koreas

From 1987 onwards, democracy firmly took root in the country. By 1992, the era of military-generals-turned-President was over. In 1997, the country's first peaceful transfer of power from the ruling party to its opposition took place.

In 1991, the local autonomous system, which was dissolved at the time of the Military Coup of 1961, was revived. In the post-1999 period, the basic labor rights of teachers and public officials were guaranteed in law.

The most noticeable change in the country was the commencement of reconciliatory and collaborative efforts between the two Koreas. In the era of the post-June Democratic Movement (1986), civilians began to engage in more direct activities for the reunification of the peninsula, and both the governments across the 38th parallel met more frequently to discuss matters of mutual concern.

In 1991, both South and North signed the Basic Agreement to the effect that they would pursue the agenda of joint prosperity based on a spirit of mutual reconciliation and cooperation.

Following the country's first peaceful transfer of power from a ruling party to the opposition, the dialogue between the two Koreas became even more brisk. Finally, in 2000, a historic South North Summit was held in P'yŏngyang, and the two leaders agreed to discuss issues in relation to the peaceful unification of the country without the intervention of outside powers.

In 2001, the North caused further controversy with its nuclear program. Inter-Korean relations experienced frequent setbacks. However, in the post-2000 Summit period, exchanges between the two at various levels have increased and economic cooperation has been achieved in a variety of sectors in mutually profitable ways. By initiating such a process, the two sides have apparently recognized the futility of mutual confrontation.

Many Koreans are now confident that democracy in the true sense of the word will take root in the country and that one day their long-cherished dream of the peaceful reunification of the Korea peninsula will become a reality.

① The Reverend Mun Ikhwon, a leader of the democratization movement, visited North Korea without obtaining the required permission of the South Korean Government and discussed matters concerning unification with North Korean President Kim Il-sung.

② From 1988 onwards, the two Koreas held Prime Ministerial-level talks on many occasions, agreeing to a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula, mutual non-aggression, and more frequent exchanges and cooperation.

③ Due to North Korea's intention to develop nuclear weapons, the two Koreas ceased all dialogue and a crisis of war loomed. Then, the North and the U.S. agreed to normalize diplomatic relations on the condition that the North renounce its nuclear program.

④ In 1997, Kim Daejung, a long-time opposition leader, was elected President. The People's Government, led by Kim, adopted the "sunshine" policy towards the North.

⑤ In 2000, Korean President Kim Daejung paid a state visit to P'yŏngyang. The leaders of South and North Korea signed the June 15 Joint Declaration.

⑥ The Six Parties, namely the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia met on many occasions to discuss matters concerning the North's nuclear program and the settlement of peace in Northeast Asia.



① Rev. Mun Ik hwan pays a visit to P'yŏngyang.

② Adoption of the South North Basic Agreement.

The 1994 North Korea U.S. Agreed Framework (Geneva Agreement).

④ The Kim Daejung Administration is sworn in.

⑤ The South North Summit Meeting.

⑥ The Six-Party Talks.

Economic Growth and Korea in the International Community

In 1997, Korea suffered a serious economic crisis. The crisis was derived from a lack of foreign exchange, and led to the collapse of many firms. The problem of unemployment also became severe, shaking the entire national economy.

Many people had doubts about the economy's potential for sustained growth. However, the economy demonstrated that it had an in-built resilience and strength, enabling it to overcome this crisis which had arisen in the process of industrialization. The country had secured the world's highest level of technology in information and many other manufacturing sectors, and possessed a large, highly educated and sophisticated workforce.

According to a recent report, the country ranks 11th in the world in terms of the size of its economy and 12th in terms of the volume of its international trade. Given the fact that Korea is a relatively small country, ranking just 108th in the world in terms of its land area and 27th in terms of its population, its achievements are indeed remarkable. The country is on the top of the world in the shipbuilding, DRAM semiconductor and TFT (Thin Film Transistor)-LCD (Liquefied Crystal Display) sectors, and ranks 5th in the world in the production of steel, synthetic fiber, cars and industrial robots.

The country's process of industrialization was chiefly based on fostering export-oriented firms; its continued economic growth was derived from its open-door policy. The number of foreign companies operating production facilities in Korea has steadily increased.

Korean businesses have penetrated aggressively into international markets, with many of them transferring their production facilities overseas, while the number of foreigners seeking work in Korea is on the rise.

Brisk cultural exchanges are occurring between Korea and other countries. Cultural borderlines have long disappeared. Large numbers of Koreans choose to study and travel in foreign countries, and the number of foreigners visiting Korea is also on the rise.

As a respected and responsible member of the international community, Korea plays an active role in sharing its cultural achievements with the rest of the world. Korean people are charming the world with their unique cultural heritage, and at the same time, they are fascinated by what has been achieved by their fellow human beings all around the world. They are eager to gain a deeper understanding of the cultures of other countries and use that knowledge to make a further contribution to the peace and prosperity of the world.



During the 2002 World Cup which was jointly hosted by Korea and Japan, people the world over marveled at the enthusiasm shown by Koreans when cheering their national team, which reached the semi-finals and achieved a fine fourth place. A large crowd of people gathered at Seoul Plaza, showing that they could unite as one to overcome any crisis.



Winter Sonata and Samulnori
Artists in Korea are highly committed to their profession. They believe that things that are most Korean are also most global.

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